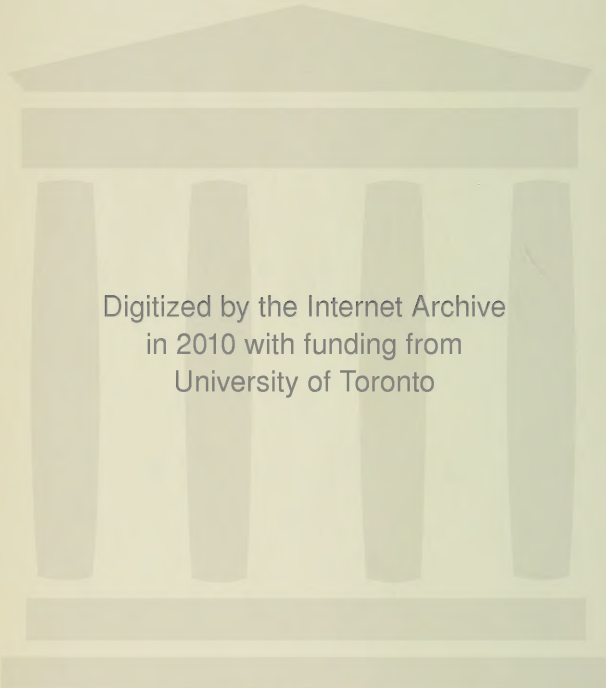




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BY

FREDERIC W. MACDONALD

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I

FOUR LETTERS TO A FRIEND ON BOOKS AND READING

I

I HAD by no means forgotten our conversation the other evening on the subject of English Literature, and was, indeed, more impressed by some things you said than perhaps appeared from my manner. You lamented the little time you had for reading, and the fact that business habits and occupations gradually take away the disposition, and even lessen the power, to engage seriously with books of the better kind, and you added that you were conscious of a sense of loss, and even of humiliation, in knowing next to nothing of our great writers beyond their names. You asked me if it was too late to remedy this, at least to some extent, and I have

been considering how I could best answer the question, and possibly give you some assistance in the matter.

Let me say at once that while I set a very high value on the knowledge of books, I am well aware that there may be strong, and even trained, intelligence apart from it, as—I am not flattering you—in your own case. But we are agreed that that fact is no disparagement of book-learning, though it suggests happy compensation for some who are without it. The question still remains, the question we were discussing—"May not a man like yourself make such acquaintance with literature as shall furnish him with a noble recreation, shall widen his range of knowledge and of thought, and bring him into contact with the best minds of his own and of other generations?"

On this subject I was about to write to you when I received your letter this morning. We had spoken, you will remember, of the Reprints that are now being issued in such a way as to put the best books within the reach of all who

care to have them, and it appears that you subsequently warmed and kindled at the thought, and have placed a whole library on your shelves at a stroke—one hundred volumes, a number that fills the ear and strikes the imagination. You ask me what I think of your venture.

Well, you have given me theme enough for a letter, or two, or more, so if I run on to inordinate length, you and your hundred volumes are responsible.

There are bookish martinets who would say, Buy one volume at a time, and read it before you buy another. That is excellent advice for impecunious youth, and in my early days I was compelled to follow it. But you are no longer a youth, and are not impecunious, and you need not regard it. It represents, not the voice of wisdom, but of prudence—quite a different thing—and is only of temporary and limited application. It is good to have books about you in numbers, to look at your shelves and see them there, and to know they are there when you are not looking at them. With what curiously unsatisfying things, by the by,

do many good people surround themselves, filling the rooms in which they live with what are called "knick-knacks," things that, for the most part, have neither beauty for the eye, nor suggestion for the soul. Wax flowers are now, I believe, impossible in the homes of the civilised ; but they have been succeeded by other things—of which let us not speak or think. When chairs and tables and the like have been provided, books are the best furniture for the rooms in which we live. They represent the unseen and the past, and help to protect us against the too great pressure of the visible and the immediate. They bear witness to the proportions of human existence, and to the spaciousness of time and thought. The newspaper and the railway guide have their uses, and are not likely to be undervalued ; but a row of books, silent but suggestive, will remind us of the real scale of things, of the links by which the generations are knit together, and of the innumerable allies and helpers that each one of us possesses in the writers of other times and other lands. It may be well for a studious

youth to have but one book on hand at a time, but he will soon find that the rule was only good for a little while, and for certain, not permanent, reasons. The normal, healthy reader will no more stick at one book for, say, a fortnight, than he will eat nothing but Quaker Oats for the same period. If he reads a Historian in the morning, he will want an Essayist in the afternoon, and a Poet at night. No one is better worth reading than Gibbon, but a month devoted to the *Decline and Fall*, with no excursions into other spheres, no parleyings with other writers, might lead to a surfeit of the book, and a quarrel with the author.

You need not, I think, be too exacting with yourself about systematic reading. If you were younger, or a professed student, I would not say so. But you may consider yourself a general reader, and sit loose to rules and regulations. The more books you have around you the better. The sight of them will alternately soothe and stimulate. At one time you will be drawn to the Historians, and Gibbon or

Motley will give you welcome. Then you will feel the charm of the Essayists, and Lamb, and Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt will brighten your leisure hours. And the Poets will wait the inevitable hour when you are susceptible to their ministry, and “on the viewless wings of poesy” you will take swift, occasional flights beyond the horizon. Set up your hundred volumes somewhere well within your sight, not in a room you seldom visit, and let their titles make their appeal. When not in the mood for one, then take another. They give you choice enough, and you will hardly fail to find what is timely and congenial.

There is something both pleasant and amusing to an old book-lover like myself in the thought of buying a hundred volumes at a time. Such an achievement would, in my early days of slow and laborious acquisition, have seemed like the capture of Babylon or the Peruvian mines—a triumph reserved for kings. And, indeed, it could not have been effected then upon the terms of to-day. To annex such fair and fruitful regions of delight for five pounds; a hun-

dred provinces, rich from the labour of historians and philosophers, of poets and essayists, acquired for a hundred shillings—think of it! When I first sought these Elysian fields it seemed to me that

“Every door was barred with gold,
And opened but to golden keys,”

so far beyond my means were the books I longed for. I first read Boswell's *Johnson* in a copy that cost over three pounds, and Burke in an edition of some six or seven volumes at ten or twelve shillings apiece. In the list of your newly acquired Classics, I see Pope's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* at a shilling each; Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* in two shilling volumes; and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* in seven volumes for seven shillings. Those books did not set out upon their journey at such prices. Pope's *Iliad* was published in six quarto volumes, and his *Odyssey* in five, at a guinea a volume—eleven guineas for the two complete works. Gibbon's *History* in six volumes cost six guineas. The authors have long since had their remuneration, the copyrights have

expired, and all their wit and wisdom, their learning and eloquence, are ours at a shilling a volume.

But a word on book-buying before I close. There is no part of the general expenditure more commonly out of proportion—and, I need hardly say, the disproportion is that of defect, not of excess—than that which has to do with books. I am not now speaking of the poor, nor yet of the wicked rich. It is in English middle-class life, where comfort is, perhaps, more studied than in any other social sphere, where expenditure, without being reckless, is large and free, that the amount expended upon books is most inadequate. Falstaff's "poor ha'porth of bread to an intolerable deal of sack" was hardly more so. In homes where there would be little hesitation about a motor-car, an orchid-house, a billiard-table, or a pianola, there would be searchings of heart over spending ten pounds on books, new or old. It is a pity, and says something for the habits and ideals that prevail which it is not pleasant to think of.

II

By this time, I imagine, you have handled your hundred volumes, glancing here and there at their contents before placing them on the shelves. It is a pleasant, kindly process. If it is one's duty to handle a worm "as though you loved him"—see Izaak Walton—how much more a book! In the delicate task of arranging them you will be assisted, if, indeed, you need assistance, by the publisher's device of clothing the historians in binding of one colour, the essayists in another, and so on. The eye comes to the help of the mind in the work of classification by species. Moreover, your volumes being all of a size you are spared an embarrassment sometimes felt by the book-lover when volumes that ought to stand side by side are utterly unlike in dimensions and appearance.

But the uniformities of size and colour presented by this series of books suggest some thoughts on which we may linger for a moment. Uniformities of any kind, political, social, or religious, often cover

diversities both wide and deep. A hundred men troop into the same lobby, and give votes indistinguishable from each other ; but beneath that unity of action are aims, ideas, and sentiments as unlike as can be. Among the members of a Church there is agreement in definite beliefs sufficient for common action ; but the atmosphere, the perspective, the proportions of things in each mind, differ with a difference that cannot be measured. It must needs be so, and in our desire for unity let us remember it.

So is it upon your shelves. The volumes standing side by side are only distinguishable from each other by the printer's label ; but the intellectual and spiritual forces that went to the making of them were found under distant and different stars, and came together no one knows how, and traversed wide realms of space to find their lodging in a human breast. *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Essays of Montaigne*, *The Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius* and the *Canterbury Tales*, *Tristram Shandy* and *The Origin of Species*—did any births of the human

soul more unlike in form and feature, in temperament and genius, ever come together? If there be any resemblances or affinities by which they can understand each other, any common elements or principles, they must be sought very deep down, certainly not in anything that is outward or obvious. Think, again, of the pre-natal history of books, of the influences and conditions under which they were shaped and quickened. The moors above Haworth, and the suppressed, secluded life of the parsonage, nursed in the bosom of the shy little Yorkshire governess the passion that blazes in the pages of *Jane Eyre*. The calm heat that glows through the *Imitatio Christi* is altar fire from the precincts of a monastery. On scanty literature, amid plebeian surroundings, the soul of Keats built for itself a palace with

“ . . . Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

Matthew Arnold is of Rugby and Oxford. London is the mighty mother of Hazlitt and Lamb; and George Borrow's books

were conceived in gipsy tents and Spanish inns, in the company of monks, brigands, and orange-women.

Here are books that stole into the world so silently that no one heard them come, and others that made a state entry, bands playing and colours flying. Some, like the poems of Keats and the novels of the Brontë sisters, are the children of youth; others, like Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, are the children of old age. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is here to remind us "that stone walls do not a prison make," and *The Vicar of Wakefield* to point the moral of light and easy living and arrest for debt. What tragedies of life and character are recalled by the names of Swift, and Burns, and Edgar Allan Poe! With what awe the names of Bacon and Shakespeare are invested, names that stand out of the ranks and above the level of general intellectual life, inscrutable in their solitude of pre-eminence and power! What happy companionships have been formed with the *Essays of Elia* and *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, with *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Oliver Twist*,

and *Mr. Pickwick* ! What honour, and affection, and esteem do we not pay to Johnson, and Burke, and Scott, and John Brown of *Horæ Subsecivæ* ! How pure from stain and all base admixture are Thomas A'Kempis and George Herbert ; how shot with strains of infirmity and fault were the characters of Montaigne, and Sheridan, and Hazlitt !

To myself the personality of great writers is supremely attractive. The man behind the book, the man within the book, draws me to him. There is even such a thing as the attraction of dislike, or, at least, an attraction that makes itself felt in spite of dislike. A disagreeable personality, if it be well marked and unmistakable, may furnish excellent companionship. The conditions of biography, and of literature generally, soften and assuage what in the intercourse of real life would be intolerable. So long as your poet or man of letters is of flesh and blood, and has some breath in him, he and I can get on together. In many cases no friendship comes of the acquaintance ; but often it does, to the happy

enrichment of one's inner life. But you cannot introduce one of these friends to another, or to the people among whom you live. They are mystic friendships, unseen, unguessed at by those around you. The sphere in which they move is within the mind. They bring their scenery and surroundings with them, and when they depart these also vanish.

You say, correctly enough, that these writers whom I speak of knowing do not know me, that they never heard of me, and probably would not care for me if they met me to-morrow. Most likely; but the objection does not touch the thing of which I am speaking. The friendships that we form with writers whom we have never seen do not require their consent. Where we find the attractive, the admirable, the lovable in poet or other writer, we draw to him, and he cannot refuse; we love him, and he accepts our affection. I do not ask Charles Lamb whether I may call him by his Christian name, nor does he take a candle to look at my organs. Tennyson is not moody with me, nor Carlyle dys-

peptic and quarrelsome, nor Coleridge interminable, nor de Quincey in bed and unable to see me at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Look over the List of Titles in your series. See what names are there, what wit and wisdom and manifold gifts they stand for. They differ from one another in all respects wherein men can differ. How little Darwin would have cared for Keats! How heartily Coleridge disliked Gibbon! Who could ask George Herbert to meet David Hume, or John Bunyan to spend an evening with Douglas Jerrold? But you and I may be on excellent terms with each and all of them, with friendships graduated from mere pleasant acquaintance to strong and deep affection.

It is worth while remembering that it took three centuries to produce the authors on your list. They came singly and separately, or in twos and threes, and were on the earth a few at a time. There is a parsimony in nature. She does not produce her best every day and on all occasions, but makes the commonplace do duty till,

on some impulse inexplicable by us, she changes her mood, and sends the sons of genius to the front without counting them. So it was in the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth, and again in the years when Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and Scott, and Byron, and Keats, and Shelley came treading on one another's heels to renew the life and ministry of poetry in England. I have said that this impulse of fruitfulness is inexplicable. There are those, I know, who would account for it by great events—the discovery of America, the French Revolution, etc.—acting on the mind with a force that dissolves the old and impregnates with the new. With those whom these explanations satisfy I have no controversy, but to me they are explanations that do not explain. Why and how great natures are produced, what laws govern the formation and kindling of any bright particular star in the intellectual heavens—much more a cluster or constellation of them—is to me much of a mystery, and I am content that it should be so.

III

I will now come to somewhat closer quarters with the list of books you have sent me. And first, with regard to the term "Masterpiece," as used by the publishers in their statement that "only the world's literary masterpieces have been, and will be, included in the series." The word may mean a Master's piece, something written by a Master, or a masterly piece of writing; in the one case the authorship being emphasised, in the other the quality of the thing written. But the two meanings easily run into each other.

The name of Master, as applied to an author, is a term of great distinction, surpassing in dignity and worth most of the accepted titles of honour. Princes and their delegates, Universities, Academies and other Corporations can bestow the latter, and will continue to do so with more or less of wisdom and fitness; but who is, and who is not, a Master in literature is determined by a man's own powers and achievements, and established by general recognition.

Far be it from me to disparage the official bestowing of titles and degrees, yet it is a cheering thought that in the domain of literature rank and honour are not assigned by any authority, either self-constituted or appointed for the purpose, but are secured by the essential qualities of the work itself, as perceived and felt by the world at large. It is well for mankind as a whole that in this sphere, at all events, promotion is by merit, and that no influence or interest can, in the long run, secure for a writer a place much above or below what really belongs to him.

And how impartial is nature—not to use the higher name for which it stands—in producing the Masters in literature from all classes, grades, and sections of human society, aristocratic and plebeian, lettered and unlettered. Milton was a learned man, Ben Jonson a scholar, and Shakespeare neither one nor the other. Macaulay, Tennyson, and Thackeray bore the Cambridge mark through life, and Newman, De Quincey, and Matthew Arnold that of Oxford. Johnson, Gibbon, Coleridge, Byron,

and Shelley had each a brief course at the University, and for various reasons broke away from it without taking a degree. The Universities are more than justified in their relation to English literature by such sons as Spenser, Bacon, Sidney, Milton, George Herbert, Dryden, Addison, Gray, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. But lest they should be exalted above measure in their maternal pride, they may be reminded of "children not theirs," who never "trod their nursery floor"—Browning and Keats, Burns and Blake, Cowper and Crabbe, Dickens and Charles Lamb, Pope, Defoe, Bunyan, and SHAKESPEARE.

Differences of social origin and upbringing will always count for something, but what that something is it would be difficult to say when we consider the parentage and early surroundings of poets and great writers. Bunyan was a tinker's son, and Defoe's father was a butcher, Carlyle's a stonemason, and Keats's kept a livery-stable. Dickens's father was a clerk in a small way, and Browning's father a clerk in a somewhat larger way. The parsonage

and the manse have sent into the world a goodly share of its brightest men and women. Goldsmith, Cowper, Coleridge, Hallam, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, and Kingsley were parsons' sons, and the Sisters Brontë and Jane Austen were parsons' daughters. From the middle classes of English life the majority of our authors would seem to have sprung; but the blood of the aristocrat and of the peasant are sufficiently represented in the peerage of our literature to show that distinction here is no class privilege.

As regards the worldly success which may, or may not, accompany success as a writer, some curious anomalies and contrasts would appear if we looked into the matter. Milton received in all some £15 for the *Paradise Lost*. Dr. Blair was paid £1,100 for three volumes of *Sermons*; Fielding £700 for *Tom Jones*; Goldsmith £60 for *The Vicar of Wakefield*; Johnson £125 for *Rasselas*; fifteen guineas for his poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, and ten for his *London*. Pope's translation of the *Iliad* brought him between £5,000 and

£6,000, and that of the *Odyssey*, largely done by others, £3,700. In another century, and under other conditions, Macaulay, Tennyson, and Dickens made fortunes by their works. But Chatterton starved and died, and Johnson, through laborious years, starved and lived. Blake was kept alive by a few friends, and Burns, the exciseman, provided food and shelter for Burns the poet. Similarly, Charles Lamb, clerk at the India House, supported the author of the *Essays of Elia*. Coleridge and Leigh Hunt were consistently impecunious and embarrassed; Southey earned his bread with his most industrious and methodical pen; and the stars in their courses brought to Wordsworth just the income he needed.

There is no covenant between Literature and her children that she shall pay them in coin of the realm. With coin of *her* realm she rewards them, but, as many of them have found, it is not coin current in the market-place. You cannot buy bread, or meat, or wine, or pay the rent with it. If your great writer of prose or verse makes money by his work, so much

the better for him. But if he does not, the spirit that drew him to authorship has broken no promise. To live a life beyond life, and through ever-widening circles of influence to touch the thought of men and women yet to be born, and be by them held in love and honour—these are the things promised to the Masters of literature, not payment in cash, though this is often thrown in.

But I am trying your patience, and I will close. I congratulate you once again on your hundred volumes. I think of them as happy islands in a tranquil sea. Cruise in and out amongst them. Land here, or there, draw your boat up on the shore, dwell for a while amid such scenes as offer, and taste such fruits as the climate and soil afford. But this is a high-flying metaphor, and may get me into trouble if I pursue it. In your collection of books you have, as Johnson said of Thrale's brewery, and as you may say with immensely better reason, "the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice." Make haste, then,

to be rich, for in haste after such riches there is no peril. And books can make you rich in knowledge of many kinds, in happy memories and pleasant fancies, in wide sympathies and large tolerance, in a deepened sense of the wonder and mystery of life, and in a clearer perception of the Divine wisdom and love by which all things human are encompassed.

IV

Like the worthy divine who published a treatise entitled *Last Words*, and followed it shortly afterwards with another, entitled *More Last Words*, I return to the subject with which I thought I had finished.

You tell me you have added to your hundred volumes half a dozen more, the latest issue of the great series of which we have spoken, and to which you feely yourself already indebted for much immediate happiness, as well as for the pleasures of hope. As we have no opportunity at present of talking them over, I will indulge in a supplementary letter. A fourth volume of

Burke, Hazlitt's *Lectures in the English Comic Writers*, Goldsmith's *Poems*, Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and *The Golden Treasury of English Lyrical Poems*; these are the latest comers to your shelves. One of the "pleasing anxious" cares of the book-lover is to find room for newcomers on shelves already crowded with such good company that eviction, or any kind of brutal dispossession, is out of the question. But a little pressure, a little readjustment here and there, with "by your leave, gentlemen, I think there is room for another—a little closer, please"—and the thing is done.

I often recall, when so engaged, the opening stanzas of Basse's *Elegy on Shakespeare*, whom he would fain have seen "put to bed" in Poets' Corner, instead of sleeping alone at Stratford:

"Renownèd Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learnèd Chaucer; and, rare Beaumont, lie
A little nearer Spenser, to make room
for Shakespeare."

Build your own Poets' Corner, to be filled, not with hallowed dust, but with the ever-

living masters of thought and utterance, and visit it and them as often as you can.

Of the books just named, and, indeed, of the wealthy company to which they belong, if I must needs choose one, and only one, to take with me on a voyage or into exile, I should certainly take Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. There you have in small compass, selected with all but unerring discernment, the best, and none but the best, lyrical pieces and songs that the English genius has produced, and the English language contains. Here are no long poems, narrative, descriptive, or didactic, with their varying levels of excellence, and the consequent necessity for selection or abridgment, but only poems of such length as is required for the expression of a single thought or feeling, or the portrayal of a single action or incident. It is under such limitations, "within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground," or other adequate but restricted metrical form, that the quint-essential spirit of poetry has in our language found utterance. While for three centuries or more our poets have raised great and

enduring structures, massive and complex, "cloud-capt towers, gorgeous palaces, and solemn temples," they have also from time to time put into a single image, or portrait, or inscription, an inspiration as fine as that which produced their largest labours, compressed into the compass of a brief song or ode, so that you may say of it, the whole poet in his essential and characteristic genius went to the making of these few lines.

A collection of the best short poems of the best poets gives you, therefore, the best that poetry has to give, if not of elaborate and detailed achievement, of utterance in which the spirit of poetry is most immediately present. Such a collection gives the best answer to the question, "What is poetry?" It answers it, not with a definition—definitions being of little use in such matters—but by putting into the reader's hands the thrice-selected best that has been written—known and felt to be such—saying, "*This* is poetry; read it till you also feel and know that it is."

If it be replied, "But that is to sub-

stitute authority for proof," I would say in return, that what is beautiful or true, does, in the last instance, speak with authority—proof, as it is generally conceived of, not being available. We are face to face with the ultimate. You cannot, I imagine, prove that a rose is lovely, a sunset glorious, a mountain majestic. But he who does not see or feel that they are so, is either deficient in perceptive power, or needs that it should be cultivated and trained. Take for example Cowper's *Loss of the Royal George*, the well-known poem beginning :

"Toll for the brave !

The brave that are no more."

Is this a poem of a high order or not ? The late Sir Leslie Stephen says of it : " Given an ordinary newspaper paragraph about wreck or battle, turn it into the simplest possible language, do not introduce a single metaphor or figure of speech, indulge in none but the most obvious of all reflections—as, for example, that when a man is drowned he won't win any more

battles—and produce as the result a copy of verses which nobody can ever read without instantly knowing them by heart. How Cowper managed to perform such a feat, and why not one poet even in a hundred can perform it, are questions which might lead to some curious critical speculation.”

Cowper himself says on the subject: “To make verse speak the language of prose without being prosaic, to marshal the words of it in such an order as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness, harmoniously, elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of the rhyme, is *one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake.*”

It will be seen that neither the author nor the critic defines the quality that constitutes these lines a poem, and a very good poem. But each of them suggests to the reader the right line of thought. The conclusion of the whole matter is, that such a volume as the *Golden Treasury* tests a reader's susceptibility to the influence of

poetry. Where that susceptibility is quick and abundant, the gates are open, and the realms of gold are his to enter when he will. Where it is imperfect, nothing will strengthen and develop it like introduction to the highest and the best. In Mr. Palgrave's words, "The reader who feels the vigour of description and the force of pathos underlying Cowper's bare and truly Greek simplicity of phrase, may assure himself *se valde profecisse* in poetry."

The *Goldsmith* now added to this series contains the whole of his poetry, edited with Introduction and Notes by Mr. Austin Dobson, whose knowledge and sympathetic insight, where eighteenth-century life and literature are concerned, can hardly be surpassed. The result is an edition of *Goldsmith* which, to the most knowing reader will be valuable, and to the less instructed invaluable. It is impossible to make a great poet of Goldsmith, but there are greater poets than he whom we could better spare. He wrote when the spirit of poetry was low in the land. The tradition of Pope had become a tyranny, and things were not

yet ripe for the inevitable revolt. But while Goldsmith accepted the established order, it was impossible for him to be dull, didactic, and mechanic, as the tendency then was. Whatever were the defects of his character, it included the admirable qualities of simplicity, sincerity, and kindness. His humour was gentle, and his touch light and delicate, even when using so formal an instrument as the rhymed couplet, which, since Pope's time, was the orthodox poetic form. Goldsmith used it with grace and charm in his two most considerable poems, *The Traveller*, and *The Deserted Village*. It is not necessary to repeat the criticism of the latter with which Macaulay and others have made us familiar—that such villages as “Sweet Auburn” were not to be found in Ireland, nor such “desolation and shapeless ruin” to be met with in England, and that the poet has brought together a happiness and a misery that belong to two different countries and to two different stages of society. That he has done so cannot be denied, and a lover of Goldsmith will admit that such a “bull”

or blunder was eminently characteristic. But it may be added that even so Johnson's splendid eulogy remains true, *nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*--he touched nothing that he did not adorn. *The Deserted Village* is as surely a classic as *The Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Its range is limited; it shows little originality, and no profundity of thought; but it breathes a gentle and humane spirit, a kindly humour, and a sense of the pathos of life and of nature in its association with life. The simple style and artless phrasing are those of an accomplished craftsman; and if all seems easy and natural it is the ease and naturalness of a master, who adds to rare original gifts the skill that comes of practice, of acquaintance with his own powers, and command of the means employed.

One sure test of the hold *The Deserted Village* has taken of the general mind is furnished by the number of passages or expressions in it that have become proverbial, and are quoted in our daily speech. Such as :

“For talking age and whispering lovers made;”

and the following lines :

“Ill fares the land, to hast’ning ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.”

“And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind.”

“A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year.”

“Shoulder’d his crutch and show’d how fields were won.”

“And e’en his failings lean’d to Virtue’s side.”

“And fools who came to scoff, remain’d to pray.”

Others might be named, but these will suffice. For myself, I may say that I was familiar with them all before I had read a line of Goldsmith—save *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Not least among the debts we owe our poets is that they have enriched the language with utterances that become part of the general currency, putting within the reach of all of us a wealth of allusion and description, wise or witty, pathetic or lofty, in a form ready for immediate handling and circulation. The old lady who complained that the play of *Hamlet* was full of quotations that she had known all her life, would have the same grievance

in connection with Gray's *Elegy* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. But the complaint is a fine compliment, after all.

You have now five volumes of *Hazlitt's Essays*. Happy man! There is a liberal education in them for one who knows how to read them. Who else can give you so much strong, sane criticism of English writers? Where is Hazlitt's superior as a book lover, as a taster and judge of all prose and verse? English Literature was the supreme object of his interest and regard. He sacrificed much to it, making a dismal failure of life in some very important respects; but as a man of letters, student, critic, and essayist, he remains one of the strongest intellects and ablest writers of the early nineteenth century, a guide generally to be followed with advantage, a critic and a disputant whom none can afford to overlook, an analyst and delineator of character hardly to be surpassed.

If as yet you have read nothing of Hazlitt's, begin with his "My first acquaintance with Poets," and its companion essay,

“Of Persons one would wish to have seen.” Then turn to his portraits of Coleridge, Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron. Having read these you may, I think, be trusted to search the corners of the five volumes, and henceforth to count their author a master in the sphere of letters, and an invaluable guide and helper both to the student and general reader.

II

DR. JOHNSON—PERSONAL AND DOMESTIC

THE two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Samuel Johnson has been recently celebrated with a warmth of feeling that perhaps no other name in our literary annals could command. There is, indeed, something altogether unique in the way that Dr. Johnson holds his own in the regard of his countrymen, notwithstanding the changes that have taken place in our literary ideals and standards, and the number of poets and men of letters who have acquired name and fame since his time. He still stands conspicuous in the tradition of English literature. Not that as poet or as thinker he ranks with the foremost that our nation has produced. But however clearly we see this he loses nothing with us, for it is not in his writing that he lives; it is his personality that

survives. We do not now handle the Dictionary that gave him contemporary fame ; we do not read the *Rambler*, whose Essays were at one time considered as wisdom's last word ; few are they who have even a speaking acquaintance with his *Lives of the Poets* ; it is Johnson himself that we know and take pleasure in. His very appearance is more familiar to us than that of any other person of past generations. When we think of him it is as sauntering along Fleet Street, or sitting at the Club, surrounded by Burke, and Goldsmith, and Joshua Reynolds, with Boswell at his elbow, observant and alert. When we quote him it is his conversation, not his books, that furnishes the quotation. With other authors, it is their writings first, and anything we can learn of their personal history afterwards. With Johnson it is not so. If all he had written were blotted out—and indeed most of it has passed out of all memory and concern—our interest in him would hardly be diminished, and we should love him none the less. For he was greater and better

than anything he ever wrote, more attractive, more human, more really alive. It is not the Lexicographer, or the author of *Rasselas* or of the *Rambler*, it is Boswell's Johnson who is known wherever the English language is spoken. The best biographer that ever was had in Johnson the best of subjects for his art ; and while Reynolds has preserved for us the massive form and features, it is to Boswell we owe a portraiture still more detailed and exact. In this biography he is still with us—strong, rugged, dogmatic, irascible, with a tender heart and a devout spirit beneath the rough exterior ; keeping down the melancholy that lay at his heart by company and conversation ; brow-beating and overbearing his opponents in talk, yet helping lame dogs over stiles, befriending the poor, and bearing with patient courtesy the ill tempers and complainings of the pensioners he housed and fed. Of the biographer's art, as of that of the painter, we may say, "Blest be the art that can immortalise," and never was that art exercised with greater skill and with more triumphant success.

Next to Boswell it is to Sir Joshua Reynolds that we are indebted for a knowledge of Dr. Johnson that falls little short of personal acquaintance. His portraits of Johnson are numerous and excellent. The earliest of them, painted in 1756, when Johnson was forty-seven years of age, represents him "sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation," and was counted a good likeness. Reynolds afterwards presented it to Boswell, and it appears in an engraving by Heath in the first edition of the *Life*. Though Boswell prized this portrait very much, his family appears to have set little store by it, as they were ashamed rather than otherwise of their father's relations with Johnson. Sir Alexander Boswell, his son, was of this mind, and, a generation later, Sir Walter Scott says: "I have heard that Johnson's picture by Sir Joshua was sent upstairs out of the sitting apartments at Auchinleck." The best known of the Johnson portraits, and always reckoned to be the best and most characteristic, suggesting the "labouring, working mind, and indolent, reposing body "

of the original, is now in the National Gallery, and has often been engraved. It was painted for Mr. Thrale in 1773, Johnson being in his sixty-fourth year, and was one of a dozen portraits of Thrale's most distinguished friends and acquaintances, including Burke, Goldsmith, Garrick, and Reynolds himself. They were hung over the book-cases in the library, and seldom has a room been more nobly furnished; for these were the best heads in England, both for the brains that were in them, and the hand that portrayed them. Those who know what prices are paid to the leading portrait painters of our own day may be interested to hear that for the majority of these portraits Reynolds received thirty-five guineas each.

Of the portraits by others than Reynolds, the quaintest and most interesting is the etching by Trotter, which shows Johnson equipped for his tour to the Hebrides as described by Boswell. "He wore a full suit of plain brown clothes, a large bushy greyish wig, black worsted stockings, and silver buckles. When journeying he wore

boots, and a very wide brown cloth great-coat, with pockets which might have almost held the two volumes of his folio *Dictionary*, and he carried in his hand a large English oak stick." This stick has become historic, or rather, legendary. When riding in the island of Mull, it was entrusted to some one to carry, and Johnson never saw it again. "Only lost," said Boswell, "and it may yet be found and recovered." "No, no," replied Johnson. "It is not to be expected that any man in Mull who has got it will part with it. Consider, sir, the value of such a piece of timber here!"

Of Johnson's married life Boswell can tell us very little. Mrs. Johnson died several years before Johnson and Boswell met, and the latter is indebted to others for what he knew of her. It was, perhaps, as well for the biographer that there was no Mrs. Johnson in the days when he hung upon the skirts of his hero, and served him with slavish and admiring devotion. It is probable that Mrs. Johnson would have liked Boswell as little as Mrs. Boswell liked Johnson. Married ladies do not always appreciate the bosom

companions of their husbands, whose continual presence and absorbing intimacy are apt to be resented. Mrs. Boswell spoke of her husband as a man led by a bear. Mrs. Johnson would probably have said that her husband was followed by a fool.

When Johnson was not quite twenty-six years of age he married a widow twenty good years older than himself. At the time that he committed this heroic imprudence he had no settled profession or prospects, was almost penniless, suffered from various physical ailments, and is represented as unattractive in the highest degree. She had a little property, not enough to tempt a fortune-hunter, and three children. Her good looks, of which in earlier days she had a moderate share, were gone, if we may trust Garrick's description of her, though his love of caricature must be borne in mind. No wonder that the widow's friends laughed at her for marrying a man young enough to be her son, while Johnson's laughed at him for marrying a woman old enough to be his mother.

But, as sometimes happens in these cases,

the persons concerned knew what they were doing. In the impecunious and ungainly scholar the widow discerned the qualities which all the world was to recognise later on. "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life," was her early judgment of him ; while Johnson, first and last, saw in her nothing but beauty and goodness. "It was a love match on both sides," he said. Garrick would imitate the young, uxorious husband and the elderly, petted wife till his friends were breathless with laughter ; but this unlikely marriage, so obviously open to ridicule, is lifted out of the domain of comedy and set amongst the stars by Johnson's faithful and enduring affection. Through seventeen years of toil and privation, while he doggedly worked his way from obscurity to fame, he tenderly cherished the wife who was growing old, and suffering from infirmities both of body and of temper ; and when she died he entered upon a widowhood of more than thirty years during which he was never consoled for her loss.

The references to her in his book of Prayers

and Meditations are numerous and affecting. On the eighteenth anniversary of her death he writes, "This is the day on which, in 1752, I was deprived of poor dear Tetty (a pet name for Elizabeth). When I recollect the time in which we lived together, my grief for her departure is not abated ; and I have less pleasure in any good that befalls me, because she does not partake it. On many occasions, I think what she would have said or done. When I saw the sea at Brighthelmstone, I wished for her to have seen it with me. But with respect to her, no rational wish is now left, but that we may meet at last where the mercy of God shall make us happy, and perhaps make us instrumental in the happiness of each other. It is now eighteen years." Two years before his death the recurring day is mentioned for the last time. "This is the day on which, in 1752, dear Tetty died. God help me. Thou, God, art merciful ; hear my prayers, and enable me to trust in Thee. We were married almost seventeen years, and have now been parted thirty." Married love that after forty-seven years gives such

evidence of tenderness and fidelity is beyond the reach of ridicule.

But the devout lover-husband does not at all mind our knowing that in his household, as in others, conjugal rights of speech were, upon occasion, claimed and exercised on both sides. "Did you ever dispute with your wife?" Mrs. Thrale once asked him. "Perpetually," was his prompt reply. "My wife had a peculiar reverence for cleanliness, like many ladies who become slaves to their own besoms, and only sigh for the hour of sweeping their husbands out of the house as dirt and useless lumber. 'A clean floor is so comfortable,' she would say, till at last I told her I thought we had had talk enough about the floor, we would now *have a touch at the ceiling*." But sometimes the lady, as one might expect, had the last word. Johnson would grumble at times at the food and the cookery. On one occasion when he was about to say grace, she stopped him by saying, "Now, Mr. Johnson, do not make a farce of thanking God for a dinner which in a few minutes you will protest is not eatable." He told this story against himself,

“but,” he added, “whatever were our faults and failings we loved each other.”

Though Johnson’s “heart untravell’d Fondly turned” to his wife while she lived, and to her memory after her death, it was his companionship with others that established the great Johnson tradition. What a company it was that gathered round him at “The Club”! Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, Edward Gibbon, Nugent and Garrick, Beauclerk and Langton and Boswell—what genius, eloquence, learning, wit, and humour these names stand for, is well known. “To predominate over such a society,” says Macaulay, “was not easy, yet even over such a society Johnson predominated.” The primacy that he exercised was not to be accounted for by mere intellectual superiority—for he was excelled by one and another of them in this respect and that—but by his commanding personality. There were those around him who accomplished greater things than he did; none of them was as great as he was. To be at their best most men of letters need to be alone, and to

have a pen in hand : Johnson was at his best in society, under the stimulus of congenial minds, and with the field of conversation open. There his wide and varied learning, his shrewdness, his ingenuity, his wit, his consummate powers of expression had their opportunity ; and behind and beneath them all was the man himself, large-built in soul as in bodily presence, born for mastery, a ruler in his own right, possessed of that “ authority ” which can neither be defined nor withstood, seldom met with, but always recognised when it exists.

III

THE RELIGION OF DR. JOHNSON

IN the later years of his life Dr. Johnson was a famous man. His days of obscure and grinding toil were over. He enjoyed a modest but sufficient income, and his position as the foremost English man of letters was established, something like a dictatorship in the domain of literature being assigned to him by general consent. The most distinguished persons sought his company, and the general public delighted in the anecdotes that reached them of his humours and eccentricities, his learning and his wit. Moreover, he had come to be regarded as a pillar of orthodoxy, and a defender of religion and morals. Literary distinction had been too often associated with irreligious principles and looseness of living; but here was the most influential

author and critic of the day bringing his great authority, and the whole weight of his character, to the support of piety and virtue. It was Addison over again, but a more sturdy and outspoken Addison, capable of greater anger and of stronger affection, less elegant and persuasive with his pen, but more powerful and effective with his tongue. Johnson might be said to have moved from Grub Street to Lambeth in the course of his career, for towards its close he was a kind of lay Archbishop, whose judgments on religion and morals were received with a deference not always given to utterances from the Episcopal Bench. How he came to occupy such a position, and what basis this reputation had in his life and character, are proper subjects of inquiry.

From first to last Johnson was, so far as we are aware, wholly uninfluenced by Methodism, whose rise and development occurred during his lifetime. Nor did the related "Evangelical" movement, with which the names of Newton, and Scott, and Milner, and Venn among the clergy, and of Cowper, and Wilberforce, and Thornton

among the laity are associated, in any way affect him. He was, throughout, an old-fashioned Church of England man, indifferent or hostile to religious developments that seemed to break with her tradition, or disturb her fixed and venerable order. He had the true eighteenth-century dread of "enthusiasm" in religion, along with what might be called a seventeenth century regard for Episcopal authority and the clerical office, and for the tone which the divines of that period had given to theology and devotion. This type of piety is one that our own age is very likely to undervalue. We are separated from it by the two Oxford movements of which Wesley and Newman were, respectively, the leaders—movements that have greatly changed the point of view and sense of proportion in matters of religion throughout English-speaking Christendom. The influence of democratic modes of thought and feeling has also told upon religious ideals and conceptions of life, so that it is only by a certain mental effort that we can do justice to the religious life and character of another age, and of

other conditions than those with which we are familiar.

Of Johnson's inner life we know more than was known, or could be known, to his contemporaries. They formed their estimate of him from what they saw and heard, from his writings, his conversations, and his general demeanour. To them he made no disclosure of that most private portion of a good man's personal history, his prayers, his struggles with temptation, his spiritual exaltations and depressions, his battle with himself, and his communion with God. Not until after his death were those affecting journals published to which he committed his inmost thoughts, and in which his faith and hope as a Christian, his penitence, his fears and distresses, his regrets and resolutions, are set forth in impressive detail. His reputation for piety was based on what men saw of his life. They might have guessed that that life had its unseen forces of goodness and strength. We know that it was so.

Johnson tells us that in his boyhood he became "a sort of lax *talker* against religion,

for I did not much *think* against it.” At Oxford he took up Law’s *Serious Call to a Holy Life*—a book that has left its mark on many a strong soul—expecting to find it a dull book, perhaps to laugh at it. “But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion after I became capable of rational enquiry.” His biographer adds: “From this time forward religion was the predominant object of his thoughts.” After long and careful study of Johnson’s *Life* I see no reason to doubt the truth of this. The very groundwork of Johnson’s character was a grave seriousness. Like many another wit, excelling in jest and repartee, and in conversation running through the entire scale of humour and paradox, he was at heart a reverent and humble-minded man, whose thoughts continually turned with awe to the great themes of religion. He was profoundly impressed with the solemnity of things spiritual, with the greatness of God, with his own sinfulness, and with the certainty of death, and judgment, and eternity. Thoughts upon these

things did not visit him now and again in the intervals of a careless life, as they visit many. They were habitual with him, the companions of his days and nights, often shaking the very depths of his being with fear, and wrapping his soul in clouds and darkness.

Every man has his temperament, and temperament has much to do with determining the character and complexion of the religious life. With Johnson a deep-rooted melancholy was inherent and inveterate. It had its source in a physical constitution never wholly free from disease, and was probably aggravated by solitude, by privations, and by injudicious modes of living. It gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking. In no circumstances could he have been an habitually cheerful man; calmness and equableness of spirit, even, were beyond his reach. This melancholy—"vile melancholy," he called it—weighed heavily upon his religion. To use Wesley's distinction, he had the faith of a servant, not of a son. Doctrinally, indeed, his belief was sound and well-ordered. He made no

terms with contemporary deism, and held with passionate earnestness to the Divinity of Christ, and the propitiatory sacrifice of His death. But the Gospel's message of peace found its way into his soul blocked by a cloud that seldom lifted, and only occasional rays of light relieved his gloom. This did not, however, produce despair, or lead to the abandonment of prayer and other spiritual exercises. If it was characteristic of him that he could not find comfort as others found it, it was equally characteristic of him to maintain the attitude of submission and obedience, striving to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.

I have already referred to the private journals in which Johnson's spiritual life is minutely portrayed, and some further account of them may now be given. In the last year of his life he was urged by some of his friends, and in particular by Dr. Adams, the Master of Pembroke College, Oxford, to publish a volume of prayers, a significant tribute to the estimation in which he was held. The incident is well told by Boswell.

As one and another who were present joined in pressing the matter upon him, Johnson became much agitated, and saying, "Let me alone, let me alone, I am overpowered," covered his face with his hands to conceal his emotion. After a while he replied that he had sometimes thought of selecting some of the best prayers he could find, adding to them some of his own, and prefixing a discourse on prayer. But nothing came of this. It may be doubted whether he could at any time have brought himself to carry out such a plan, so great was his reverence for the offices and ministrations of religion, and his sense of unworthiness to engage in them. In any case, it was now too late. He had but a few months to live, infirmities weighed heavily upon him, and he had neither strength nor spirits for any sustained effort.

When he spoke of "adding some prayers of his own," it is probable that he had in mind some that he had at various times written for his own use. For many years he had kept a kind of diary, often discontinued and often renewed, and certainly

not intended for any eyes but his own. In it he notes recurring times and seasons—the New Year, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, the memorable anniversaries of his life, and his special periods of mental conflict or depression. He moralises upon the flight of time, and mourns over broken vows and unfulfilled purposes. He reviews his good resolutions, and renews them with prayers for strength to perform them. He asks God's blessing upon his studies and occupations. He expresses his belief in the mercy of God, and the redemption made by Jesus Christ, and implores the forgiveness of his sins, the cleansing of his soul, and fit preparation for a peaceful Christian death.

Along with the deepest utterances of his heart are memoranda of slight and trifling incidents, grotesque, indeed, at times. There are details concerning his pains and ailments, his diet and his medicine. He writes of the spasms in his stomach, and the blister laid to his back. He records eating two cross-buns, and drinking his tea without milk on Good Friday, and being sleepy in

church, and giving Boswell Pascal's *Pensées* to read in order to keep him quiet. He gives the names of friends who had called to see him, and the amount of his gratuities to the servants at Mr. Thrale's. This mixing together of things heterogeneous is clear proof of the rough, informal nature of the Diary. Had he been writing for others to read, many of the entries would have been omitted, and had he revised it for publication they would doubtless have been struck out. But such as it was, he placed it, shortly before his death, in the hands of his friend, Dr. Strahan, the Vicar of Islington, with permission to print it, and the *Prayers and Meditations* appeared in the month of August 1785, Johnson having died on December 13, 1784.

The volume that bears this title is not, then, a systematic book of devotions. It does not belong to the class of pious manuals so numerous in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of which Bishop Taylor's *Holy Living*, *The Whole Duty of Man*, and Nelson's *Festivals and Fasts* are conspicuous examples. It has no pretension to method

or completeness, as might be expected from the circumstances of its origin ; but, on the other hand, it possesses personal and human interest of a very high order. There are many books of devotion that are not disfigured—if that be the right word—by any trace of the writer's infirmities and sorrows ; in which, indeed, no trace of his individuality appears ; and Johnson would have known as well as any one how to keep such things out of a formal composition had that been his aim. But he wrote his prayers and meditations to ease his own labouring soul, and strengthen himself in piety and virtue. In so doing he mentions now and again little matters which have made the reader smile, and given the critic an occasion to be severe ; but, after all, what things are great and what things are small in relation to the soul's welfare none of us altogether knows, especially when it is the soul of another.

Both for their own qualities, and as revealing the inner life of the writer, the *Prayers and Meditations* would well repay a close examination. I can, however, at

present only call attention to one feature of them. Johnson's occupations were those of a scholar and an author, and, in addition to the general responsibilities of life, he felt the particular responsibility attaching to his vocation. What kind of influence a writer exercised upon the community was with him a matter of supreme importance. To set forth truth, to commend goodness, to elevate and purify the sentiments of his readers, to condemn what is false and vicious in opinion or practice, should be an author's highest aim. On the other hand, to mislead the judgment or corrupt the principles of others was an offence for which no learning, wit, or eloquence could atone. With convictions like these, we find among Johnson's Prayers special petitions for God's blessing upon his studies and literary labours. Here are examples. *Before any new study*: "Almighty God, in Whose hands are all the powers of man ; Who givest understanding, and takest it away ; Who, as it seemeth good unto Thee, enlightenest the thoughts of the simple, and darkenest the meditations

of the wise, be present with me in my studies and enquiries, . . . and so further with Thy help that labour, which, without Thy help, must be ineffectual, that I may obtain such success as will most promote Thy glory, and the salvation of my own soul, for the sake of Jesus Christ." *On beginning the second volume of my Dictionary* : "O God, Who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labour, and in the whole task of my present state ; that when I shall render up at the last day an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ." *Prayer on beginning The Rambler* : "Grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking, Thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote Thy glory, and the salvation both of myself and others."

A comment upon this prayer that I have met with in a dead and forgotten publication—*A Critical Enquiry into the Moral Writings of Dr. Samuel Johnson*, 1802—is very suggestive. The writer says : "Was it not an astonishing weakness of

mind, or a childish prejudice, which induced the author to compose and address a short prayer to the Deity, on the commencement of his ‘Rambler’?” These words exactly express a tone and spirit then generally prevailing. That a man should regard prayer with any seriousness, that he should seek the blessing of God upon his labours, and hope by means of them to promote his own salvation and that of others, would be thought proof of “astonishing weakness of mind,” or else “childish prejudice,” not only by this anonymous critic, but by the majority of people of fashion, of wits, and poets, and men about town. English society was at that time, perhaps, as little influenced by any real religious belief as at any period of its history. To fall in with its shallow philosophy and lax morality was, for any one entering the world, the easiest thing to do, and many there were who did it. But not so Samuel Johnson. He had, as we have seen, an inner life nourished and fortified in secret by communion with God, and there was that in his strong, combative nature and com-

manding personality that came to its aid, enabling him to more than hold his own against sceptics and loose livers, and leave upon his generation the impression, not only of a great man, but of a great Christian.

IV

A LITERARY DIARY—WILLIAM ALLINGHAM

I

THE *Diary of William Allingham* is a welcome addition to recent literary history and anecdote. Its author, in the later years of his life, set himself to write his autobiography, but did not get beyond a chapter or two descriptive of his childhood and early youth. The remainder of the volume consists of extracts from his diaries skilfully put together, and elucidated by brief notes. It is edited by Mrs. Allingham and her friend, Mrs. Ernest Radford, and in one respect only have we to complain of the editorial discretion. Many of the entries in the diary were, like those of other people, mere memoranda, sufficient to recall matters to the mind of the writer,

but having no interest or meaning for any one else. It was scarcely worth while, after a lapse of forty years, to publish such notes as : *Wednesday* : "To London by 10.20 train." *Thursday* : "Walk to Gloucester Road, Kensington Gardens. Sit." *Nov. 5* : "Assembly Rooms—Election meeting." But this is a small matter.

William Allingham was a true poet, though not a great one. Tennyson said of him, "The man has a true spirit of song in him, I have no doubt of it." I do not think he is now much read. The *Music Master* and *Laurence Bloomfield* dwell in seldom-visited cloisters, with much good company of similarly forgotten poems. His *Nightingale Valley*, a collection of lyrics and short poems, is a pleasant memorial of the poet-editor, prized by those who possess it. Its publication preceded by a few months that of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, which, perhaps, drew attention away from it, and spoiled its chance. It is, nevertheless, an excellent selection, made by a true lover of poetry, and appealing to such.

Mr. Allingham was born in the West of Ireland in 1824. He had but little schooling of an adequate sort, was clerk in a bank at fifteen, and at the age of twenty-two obtained a post in the Customs, a service in which he spent nearly five-and-twenty years. But these things were only the framework of his life, which from boyhood was devoted to literature. He had a quick appreciation of nature, and a love for art and music, but books were his chief interest. They were his masters, and, though he regretted his want of a regular education, they made him a man of wide knowledge and cultivated taste, and a capable literary craftsman. In 1870 his connection with the Customs ceased, and he became a professional man of letters, first as sub-editor and then as editor of *Fraser's Magazine*. He died in 1889, at the age of sixty-five.

The main interest of the *Diary*, however, does not centre in the writer, but in his friends ; in his association with distinguished people, whose sayings and doings he records. Allingham was always strongly drawn to persons of artistic and literary distinction,

and there was that in him which gave him access to circles and to individuals not generally easy of approach. Into one charmed circle, within which were to be found more varied and splendid gifts than perhaps in any other in England at that time, he was cordially received, to the great advantage of his intellectual life, and of his genial, kindly nature. It was the circle in which Rossetti, and Burne-Jones, and William Morris, and Swinburne, and Madox Brown, and Arthur Hughes, and Val Prinsep—to name no more—were moving, each in his orbit, towards certain common ideals in literature and art. His introduction to the Burne-Joneses in 1860 is thus described by Lady Burne-Jones :

“He was a distinguished-looking man, though not tall ; dark, with a fine cast of face, and most Irish eyes—light in the darkness ; his thick black hair was brushed close to his head and parted in the middle, but rippled in smooth, close lines that no brush could straighten. He was disposed to convince me that I was a sister of George MacDonald, the novelist, for the *dramatis*

personæ of his life were of importance to him, and this arrangement fitted in well with his conception of their order. His conversation was extremely interesting; serious in manner, with an attractive reserve which yet gave the impression that he cared for sympathy, and an evident minute interest in all that passed before him; a good companion, ready to talk, and easily amused. . . . The threefold friendship then begun never ceased."

The first of the group with whom Allingham made acquaintance was Rossetti, and his friendship with that masterful genius—uncontrolled and uncontrollable by himself or any other—if it did not run "smooth," lasted for several years, and then came to an end, not by sudden rupture, but by a gradual drawing apart. One of the most melancholy aspects of Rossetti's history is the dropping off, one after another, of his friends, not through actual quarrel, but because his friendship became impossible. They had to let him go his way, and to go their own, for the most part not with wrath or resentment, but with affectionate

memories of the past, and lasting admiration of his great powers.

The glimpses of Rossetti that this *Diary* affords add little to our knowledge of him. In spite of Allingham's admiration of his difficult friend's genius, I think he found it hard to like him, and impossible to love him; and of Rossetti it was particularly true that you must love him in order to understand him. Difficult, indeed, he was, even in his earliest and best days, but along with it was a power of fascination that few could resist. My own remembrance of him goes back to the time when it was at its height, and he was the undisputed sovereign of the group of which he was the central personality. To me, a boy in my teens, he was very kind, and was good enough to prophesy for me a brilliant career in a line of life very far removed from that which I have followed. "Born to raise the fallen fortunes of the British stage," was the central note in his prediction of my future. But as I was at the time divided in my desires between going to sea and qualifying for the Bar, his incorrect diag-

nosis of my case may be forgiven. Anyway, it was genial and kindly in its spirit. He was at times most lovable, I thought, but by no means always; for even one so young and inconsiderable as I felt something of the painful qualities in him that had such unhappy development in later years.

But there was far more in Rossetti, more and better, than the *Diary* suggests. Nearly every reference in it to Rossetti suggests that the friendship with Rossetti, if a coveted possession, was also an irksome one, and never had in it the affection which, in spite of his faults, Rossetti could feel and could inspire. The following extracts from the *Diary* will speak for themselves:—

July 20th, 1866.—"My old regard for him stirs within me, and would be as warm as ever *if he would let it.*"

In the autumn of 1867 they were staying together at Lymington:

"I find R. on the sofa, has not been out, nor looked at his picture, but been reading *The Mill on the Floss* all day."

"I try to get R. over to the Island and coax him as far as the pier, but it is rather

windy, and he entirely objects to be seasick, and doesn't want to see either Mrs. Cameron or Tennyson. He takes no interest whatever in the sea, ships, boats, etc."

"There are traces of superstition noticeable in him, none of religion. R. walks very characteristically, with a peculiar lounging gait, often trailing the point of his umbrella on the ground, but still obstinately pushing on and making way, he humming the while with closed teeth, in the intervals of talk, not a tune, nor anything like one, but what sounds like a *sotto voce* note of defiance to the Universe. Then suddenly he will fling himself down somewhere, and refuse to stir an inch farther. . . . He very seldom takes particular notice of anything as he goes, and cares nothing about natural history, or science in any form or degree. It is plain that the simple, the natural, the naïve are merely insipid in his mouth ; he must have strong savours, in art, in literature, and in life. Colours, forms, sensations are required to be pungent, mordant. In poetry he desires spasmodic passion, and emphatic, partly archaic,

diction. He cannot endure Wordsworth. Milton he dislikes. In foreign poetry, he is drawn to Dante by inheritance; in France he is interested by Villon and some others of the old lyric writers; in Germany by nobody. To Greek literature he seems to owe nothing, nor to Greek art, directly. In Latin poetry he has turned to one or two things of Catullus for sake of the subjects. English imaginative literature, Poems and Tales, here lies his pabulum: Shakespeare, the old Ballads, Blake, Keats, Shelley, Browning, Mrs. Browning, Tennyson, Poe being first favourites, and now Swinburne. In painting, the early Italians, with their quaintness, and strong, rich colouring, have magnetised him. In sculpture he only cares for picturesque and grotesque qualities, and of architecture, as such, takes, I think, no notice at all."

There is no malice in all this, but, assuredly, not much love. By the time one can analyse a friend with such precision the friendship is in a poor way; so we are not surprised to read, some two months later:

“ My last visit to London was an unhappy one. In art, and still more in life, Rossetti and I have discords not to be resolved. Should we ever have been, or supposed ourselves, such friends in early days if we had lived constantly near each other? Has he changed? If I have, I am not aware of it.”

Three years previously he had written : “ Our intimacy is a thing of the past.” It had to a certain extent revived, and struggled on for a while, but it now quietly came to an end. For the final estrangement no blame, I take it, was due to Allingham. The fate of Rossetti’s friendships with other men seems to put that beyond question. When Burne-Jones says : “ As for Gabriel, I have seen him but little, for he glooms much, and dulls himself, and gets ill, and better, and is restless, and wants, and wants, and I can’t amuse him,” he is referring to the habits and tendencies that Allingham alludes to, only he deals with them more tenderly. Allingham never knew Rossetti as Burne-Jones did, never saw in him what Burne-Jones had seen with eyes of admira-

tion and affection. Compare the "Our intimacy is a thing of the past," Allingham's epitaph on a buried friendship, with the cry that came from the heart of the other: "I miss Gabriel at every turn, and more and more."

I have referred to Rossetti's infirmities and defects more than I have liked to do, my pleasant early memories protesting the while; it could hardly be otherwise with the *Diary* before me. But its pages do not show us Rossetti's full, best self, and give no hint of the surpassing mastery he long exercised, not over weak and foolish admirers, but over men gifted far above the average. He was one of those rare men whose personality was commanding and impressive far beyond what could be inferred from his work, however excellent. So it was with Johnson, to whom Burke, and Goldsmith, and Reynolds, and Burney gave cheerful allegiance, and Gibbon paid reluctant homage. So it was with Carlyle, when Ruskin spoke of him as "the Master," and pilgrims came from over land and sea, counting themselves happy if they got

within earshot of the chair where he sat in judgment. And so it was, in large measure, though after quite another manner, with Rossetti when the fountain of life in him ran free, and no malignant influence as yet troubled heart or brain. He was among his fellows as a man born to rule, exercising his sovereignty, it might be lazily and languidly, but with no thought of resistance on the part of any one concerned. Of all this there is proof in detail in the *Memorials* of Burne-Jones, the *Lives* of Morris and Madox Brown, the biographic sketches of Mr. Hall Caine and Mr. Benson, and in traditions that abide. The company that gathered round him was composed of men of marked individuality and independence, most of them in a state of revolt against authority of various kinds, a team that might be led, but which no charioteer could drive. And this is how they thought and spoke of Rossetti during his golden years.

Burne-Jones writes :

“ In those first years I never wanted to think but as he thought, and all he said and did fitted me through and through.

He never harangued or persuaded, but had a gift of saying things authoritatively, and not as the scribes. And mingled with this a humour that lightened his words of all heaviness, so that I went from him cheerful and solemn. As I walked with him in the streets, I wondered what the people were so busy about that they could not stop to look at him. In the miserable ending years I never forgot this image of him in his prime, and upbraided any fate that could change him. . . . He to me was as Pope and Emperor."

This was Burne-Jones's mind about Rossetti from the day when he introduced a friend to him, telling him beforehand, "We shall see the greatest man in Europe," to the time, not long before his own death, when he wrote, "Seventeen years ago my glorious Gabriel died."

Lady Burne-Jones, too, shared her husband's mind. "Gabriel was there in a magnificent mood," she says of a certain evening; "no other word describes it, when he passed through a room bringing pleasure to all by his beautiful urbanity,

a prince among men." Morris had, perhaps, the strongest, most self-sufficing nature among them, but his biographer says: "Rossetti's conquest of him was, while it lasted, complete in proportion to the strength which was subdued." "I want to imitate Gabriel as much as I can," was, for a time at least, his strain. One might be sure that the want to imitate any one would not last long with Morris. Few men have been more imitated than he; fewer still have had it less in them to imitate others. Burne-Jones rejoiced in the "authority" with which Rossetti spoke. On Morris the note of "authority" was lost, and he was indifferent or rebellious as the case might be—the more marvel that for a while even he came under Rossetti's sway. When in his genially tempestuous way Morris was on the rampage, bodily and mentally, he used to make me think of leviathan: "Canst thou put a hook into his nose, or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? Will he speak soft words unto thee?"

Madox Brown was Rossetti's senior in years, and in the practice of art, and was at one time his instructor, but, writing after Rossetti's death, he says: "I find now what I was scarcely conscious of before that I used to paint always with a vague idea of his approbation in the distance."

The late Mr. Val Prinsep wrote "Rossetti was the planet round which we revolved"; and one who came to know him at a somewhat later period, Mr. Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet, breaks out, in writing of him: "What a supreme man is Rossetti! Why is he not some great exiled king, that we might give our lives in trying to restore him to his kingdom?"

But this is enough. All lives of Rossetti are, for various reasons, melancholy reading; but nothing can obscure the fact that he was for years a master-spirit in the realms of poetry and art, and one of those rare beings who, without effort, are leaders and commanders of others, impressing themselves in a royal manner upon comrades and friends who delight to call them Master.

Little of this appears in Allingham's *Diary*, good as it is, and therefore I have been at some pains to point it out.

I have said before that it gives me no pleasure, but the reverse, to allude to the defects of the greatly gifted man whose orbit I touched at a point or two long years ago; no pleasure to think of the gloomy and bitter afternoon that followed his radiant morn. Physical and mental evils, subtle in action and deadly in result, wrought their will upon him, and sympathy and sorrow are more becoming in us than anger or scorn as we lay down the story of his life. Rossetti knew well the Christ of art—mediæval, renaissance, modern—had he but known the living Christ what different voyaging might he have made! Had he but once caught sight of Him to Whom his sister Christina consecrated a genius hardly less than his own, he would have found rest for his troubled spirit, and guidance for his weary feet.

V

CARLYLE AND ALLINGHAM

MR. ALLINGHAM'S first acquaintance with literary men was the reward of a certain "pushfulness" on his part. While still a very young man at Ballyshannon he managed to draw Leigh Hunt and George Gilfillan into a correspondence with him. The next step was to call on Leigh Hunt when a visit to London gave the opportunity, and from that time onwards men of letters were the special objects of his attention and, one might say, pursuit. One is inclined to think that kindly old Leigh Hunt was enjoying himself with the eager young Irishman when he said to him: "Browning is a pleasant fellow, has few readers, and will be glad to find you admire him. I will take an opportunity of asking Dickens,

Carlyle, and Browning to meet you!" Anyway, if they did not exactly meet *him*, Allingham soon met *them*, and glided into intimacy with them and others, as his *Diary* shows. About this time he records that he dreamed he dined with the Queen, and recited a poem to her, which dream is surely indicative of the trend of his waking thoughts.

In due course he writes to Carlyle, apparently asking advice respecting his studies, as he gets a letter from him recommending him to study general history and German. This was a beginning that led to much, for it opened the way to an intimacy which lasted to the close of Carlyle's life. Allingham felt the value of it from the first, and took notes of the old hero's talk, probably with some thought of playing Boswell to his Johnson. If he has not done this he has at least made excellent addition to our store of Carlyle anecdote, and this is perhaps the most interesting feature of his *Diary*.

Comparison between Carlyle and Dr. Johnson is a very natural one. Each of

them exercised a sort of sovereignty in the literary world of his time, and in his later years was an oracle whom it was accounted a kind of profanity to question or withstand. Each of them excelled in conversation, and would say his wisest and his foolishhest things under its stimulus. When pugnacity was aroused nice discrimination was out of the question, and both the one and the other gave hardy judgments of the most amazing kind. This tendency should be borne in mind; and in presence of some of the things they are, truly enough, reported to have said, one may be allowed to remember Charles Lamb's comment on a rhapsody of Coleridge, "It's only his fun." It is not necessary to push the comparison between the Sage of Chelsea and the Sage of Fleet Street any farther, at least here and now.

The following are a few of Carlyle's literary judgments recorded in Allingham's *Diary*. "He said Masson's praise of Milton was exaggerated; Milton had a gift in poetry—of a particular kind. *Paradise Lost*

is absurd ; I never could take to it at all, though now and again clouds of splendour rolled in upon the scene."

Hopelessly heterodox in his estimate of Milton, Carlyle was "sound," if not specially enlightened, on the subject of Shakespeare. "The longer I live, the higher I rate that much-belauded man. It struck me often in reading Shakespeare—this man knew a hundred times more about animals, plants, and all the visible world than I do : how did he learn it all ? What he needs for his purpose is ready to hand. . . . He was above everybody of every time. . . . No such man has been seen in the world. . . . Not one of the Old Dramatists but Shakespeare is worth anything." After reading Swift he said that "reading *As You Like It* was like a sea-bath ; Shakespeare was a man of many thoughts, most delicate and sweet."

There is nothing very penetrating in all this, no indication of special grasp or insight. Broadly speaking, Carlyle was not moved by poetry. Notwithstanding his extraordinary intellectual power he possessed

in very small degree the perceptions and sensibilities to which poetry appeals. "His ignorance of the *technique* of Poetry," Allingham writes, "is astonishing, and by me inexplicable. He has read a vast quantity of poetry, and admired much that he found there . . . but after reading many thousand lines of the best Poets, he remains entirely insensible to the *structure* of verse, to the indispensable rule, derived from the nature of the human mind and ear."

To continue our quotation of Carlyle's literary judgments; which, being for the most part very matter-of-fact, may be given in catalogue form:

Shelley.—"He had not the least poetic faculty. I never could read anything he wrote. It was all a shriek merely."

Keats.—"Keats wanted a world of treacle." This is bettered by Mrs. Carlyle, as might be expected: "Almost any young gentleman with a sweet tooth might be expected to write such things. *Isabella* might have been written by a seamstress who had eaten something too rich for supper and slept upon her back"!

Browning.—" *The Ring and the Book*—what a thing it is ! Browning has a great quantity of miscellaneous reading about him, but no solid basis of knowledge in anything. But he is a man of great abilities."

Swinburne.—"There is not the least intellectual value in anything he writes."

Walt Whitman.—"It is as though the town-bull had learnt to hold a pen."

It is not worth while to take such judgments as these seriously ; partly because of Carlyle's incapacity towards whole provinces of literature, and partly because of his habit of paradoxical talk. On the whole, he seems to have regarded poets as inferior persons, or rather, the writing of poetry as an inferior pursuit, not altogether creditable to those engaged in it. In the early days of his acquaintance with Tennyson, he urged him to leave verse and rhyme, and apply his genius to prose ; and, alluding to the poet's fine bodily presence, told him that he was a life-guardsman spoilt by making poetry. "Only in later years," says the present Lord Tennyson, "did he

become reconciled to my father's writing poetry."

The reader of to-day, especially if he be still in his youth, can but faintly imagine the influence that Carlyle exercised upon ingenuous and impressible minds fifty years ago. It was not merely that he was a star of the first magnitude in those literary heavens to which the eyes of the young are continually raised. He wielded more than the power of literature over the springing life of his time. He was taken for a prophet, The very name was revived for his benefit, "A prophet, yea more than a prophet" was, it is no exaggeration to say, the response called forth from multitudes of readers by *Sartor Resartus*, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, and *The History of the French Revolution*. He seemed to be the very embodiment of moral force and spiritual authority. His "Gospel of Work," his denunciation of shams and unrealities, his exaltation of power, the doom that he pronounced upon weakness, his doctrine of Divine government working chiefly here on earth through masterful and capable

men—all this, proclaimed with much heat and eloquence, swept the younger generation off its feet, and carried it away in the stream of enthusiasm and devotion. For the time other shrines were forsaken and older oracles disregarded. But as the years went on Carlyle's manner became something of a mannerism, ringing a little hollow, and carrying less conviction. The excesses and limitations of his doctrine came to be understood and allowed for. That his voice was resonant and far-reaching none could deny, but the inspiration was more and more questioned, and so there set in a steady decline in his influence as interpreter of things human and divine, and a general disposition to base his reputation on great literary qualities rather than on his calling as a prophet.

To this the abundant biographic material that we now possess has no doubt contributed. We know the oracle by his fireside as well as on his tripod, and his familiar discourse assists us in the interpretation of his high prophetic utterances. And the result of it all, in our judgment, is that

while abundant fame will still be his, he is not of the goodly fellowship of the prophets, or, if he be, it is as a minor prophet, from whom the larger visions of the Kingdom of God were withheld.

Mr. Allingham's *Diary* gives us various judgments and opinions of Carlyle on the great questions of religion.

Mr. Allingham's own religious belief need not be discussed. Christ and Christianity had no place in it. Nor, as we shall see, do they really stand for anything in the belief of Carlyle. That Carlyle believed in God, the Creator and moral Governor, is certain: "It is impossible to believe otherwise than that this world is the work of an Intelligent Mind. The Power which has formed us—He, or It, if that appears to any one more suitable, has known how to put into the human soul an ineradicable love of justice and truth." The argument from his moral consciousness was with Carlyle supreme. "It is an utterly contemptible theory that out of dead, blind dust should spring the sense of right and wrong." Hearing from Browning that Huxley had said,

“In the beginning was—Hydrogen,” Carlyle exclaimed: “Any man who spoke thus in my presence I would request to be silent. No more of that stuff, Sir, to me.” As his first and last word on this subject, he says: “I know nothing whatever of God except what I find within myself—a feeling of the eternal difference between right and wrong.”

But Cicero and Seneca, to say nothing of the Greeks, had got as far as this. Carlyle’s conceptions of the nature, and character, and will of God show little or no advance upon theirs—a great disqualification in the case of a “prophet” coming two thousand years after them to teach a world that had travelled far since their day.

There is no reference in these conversations to Jesus Christ. But, speaking of the Christian religion, Carlyle said: “I studied the Evidences of Christianity for several years, with the greatest desire to be convinced, but in vain. *I read Gibbon, and then first clearly saw that Christianity was not true.*” It is difficult to believe in Carlyle being really influenced by Gibbon,

except in his youth, and for a little while. But on another occasion he says : “ Goethe drove me out of it, taught me that the true things in Christianity survived and were eternally true, and pointed out to me the real nature of life and things.” We are not inclined to attribute very much either to Gibbon or to Goethe in the matter. Carlyle was a man who went his own way from the beginning, very suspicious of spiritual guides, and abundantly confident in himself. At fifteen he made his mother weep by saying to her : “ Did God Almighty come down and make wheelbarrows in a shop ? ” Sixty years later he still thought that way of putting it very effective for discrediting the doctrine of the Incarnation, and repeated it with a variation that does not improve it : “ I do not in the least believe that God came down upon earth and was a joiner, and made chairs and hog-troughs ; or came down at any time more than He comes down now into the soul of every man.” To find a stumbling-block in the chairs and feeding-troughs that might or might not

be made in the Carpenter's Shop at Nazareth appears to show deficiency of imagination rather than excess of it, and reminds one of the little girl who said, "I don't believe God made flies, it would be such niggling work."

Such a theistic belief as Carlyle's could not inspire or sustain a strong faith in a future life. He would sometimes say concerning it: "We know nothing. All is, and must be, utterly incomprehensible." And again: "I have thought little of this, *pro* or *con*. I long ago despaired of any response to any such enquiry." There is a slightly more hopeful tone in the following: "I have no kind of definite belief or expectation whatever as to the Future—only that all will be managed with wisdom, the very flower of wisdom." Conversing once with Tennyson on the immortality of the soul, he said, referring to the Scriptures, "Eh! old Jewish rags; you must clear your mind of all that. Why should we expect a hereafter? Your traveller comes to an inn, and he takes his bed; it's only for one night; he leaves next day, and another

man takes his place and sleeps in the bed that he has vacated"—surely a most inconclusive illustration if intended as an argument, as was shown by Tennyson's prompt reply :

"Your traveller comes to his inn, and lies down in the bed, and leaves the inn in the morning, and goes on his way rejoicing, with the sure and certain hope and belief that he is going somewhere, where he will sleep the next night."

For organised Christianity Carlyle had little but impatient contempt, although his historic insight enabled him to perceive its vast influence on human affairs, and to do literary justice to some of its impressive aspects. "I have for many years strictly avoided going to church, or having anything to do with Mumbo-Jumbo." Here his insight, and something still deeper, failed him, or he could not have used such an expression in such a context. But his abstinence from participation in the unmeaning and the unreal had its lapses of inconsistency : "I stood sponsor the other day to Sir Baldwyn Leighton's child : I

didn't like it, but was told it was only a form. I don't think it was right. I have an unfortunate difficulty in saying No." On which two obvious remarks may be made : *First*, That Carlyle altogether underestimated his own power of obstinacy. No man living said *No* more frequently, or said it louder, or in more decisive tones. And, *Second*, To submit to what was said to be "only a form" was one of the vile human habits that he denounced through the whole gamut of denunciation for full fifty years, such denunciation being, indeed, a main part of his work in the world, and of the very essence of his calling as a prophet. "I didn't like it, but was told it was only a form," is a phrase that Carlyle, of all men, ought never to have used, and those who count him a prophet have cause to reproach him for doing so.

It is nearly thirty years since Carlyle died. His writings are now "standard works," known in their strength and weakness, and whether the twentieth century set much store by them or not, it will continue to acknowledge that they were

a chief glory of English Literature in the nineteenth century. But their influence on thought and feeling, and especially on the ideals and aspirations of the young, has undoubtedly declined, and the explanation of the decline is, I am persuaded, largely accounted for by a primary deficiency in Carlyle's equipment. His spiritual vision was *not* deep, his spiritual grasp was *not* strong. Not all his stormy eloquence, with its often-invoked "immensities," "eternities," "silences," and the like, conceals from us the doubt and dissatisfaction that lay at his heart. Though the word falls often from his pen, he had no "Gospel" for the world, no belief in the redemption and recovery of man through the Incarnate Son of God. On the supreme questions he had few if any settled convictions, and was more or less angry whenever he discussed them. Mr. Allingham knew his Carlyle well, and tempered his admiration for the great man with a freezing candour when he came to write his *Diary*:

"He was contemptuous to those who held to Christian dogmas: he was angry

with those who gave them up; he was furious with those who attacked him. If equanimity be the mark of a Philosopher, he was, of all great-minded men, the least of a Philosopher."

VI

THE BIOGRAPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER

THE very natural desire to know something of the personal life and character of great writers, be they philosophers or poets, is from time to time rebuked as being unreasonable and impertinent. "Take his work as he offers it to you," it is said; "his private life is his own, and does not concern you." But this has never been found very convincing, and in the majority of instances is obviously untrue. As Addison said in his pleasant way, "To know whether a writer be a black or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor, with other particulars of the like nature, conduces very much to the right understanding of an author." And that authors generally have not been averse to the gratifying of this

curiosity is abundantly and happily proved by our biographical literature. Even the proud reserve of Tennyson sanctioned beforehand the biographical labours of his son. Not even he could count the general desire to know something of the poet in his study and by his fireside as altogether base or despicable, and to his son's interpretation of his father's mind in the matter the world is much indebted. But there is no room for hesitation or scruple on the part of those who desire personal acquaintance with the author of *The Synthetic Philosophy*. He made abundant provision for satisfying the desire, first by the *Autobiography* which he left ready for publication, and second by the ample *Biography* written by Dr. David Duncan, in accordance with Mr. Spencer's testamentary request. In passing, therefore, from the philosophy of Herbert Spencer to the sphere of his private or personal life, we are not intruders, but invited guests.

And, we may add, if we have any rights at all in such matters, they are perhaps at their strongest as towards men whose

teaching enters the sphere of morals and religion, dealing with the ultimate principles, convictions, and ideals on which life rests, and by which it is guided and inspired. Both religious and anti-religious teachers may be fairly called upon to show their faith by their works; in other words, to show how the principles they advocate work out in practice, how they stand the strain of actual life, and what is their outcome in character and experience. If, for example, agnostic morality is richer and more fruitful than that which is nourished by religious faith; if character that owes nothing to the motives which religion supplies is more beautiful and more complete than that which has its main inspiration in a religious belief, then religion is proportionately discredited, and agnosticism is so far vindicated. It is impossible to banish these thoughts from the mind when reading the biographies of distinguished non-Christian thinkers, of which there have been some notable ones during the last few years. The ordinary Christian man may be no match for John Stuart Mill or Professor

Huxley, for Leslie Stephen or Herbert Spencer, and yet be quite capable of judging whether they were better served by their non-Christian beliefs than he and others are by their faith in Christ. For philosophers and scientific men stand in as much need as any one else of whatever can uplift and sanctify human nature. It is not then presumptuous on his part if he says, "I see no sign here of new sources of strength, of a more successful treatment of the problems of life, or of any discoveries that lessen the value of the faith and principles of a Christian man." There were those who highly esteemed Herbert Spencer who felt this, and did not hesitate to tell him so. His lifelong friend, Richard Potter, writing to him in 1884 on the subject of his controversy with Frederic Harrison, said: "I have a powerful affection for you, and none for Harrison, and I have a deep interest in your good name and happiness, but I am not one of the disciples or believers in your philosophy, nor in Comtism either. I am unable to accept either the one or the other as a

substitute for the Christianity which I have been reared in."

Herbert Spencer came of a family that for two generations was connected with Methodism. His father, when about thirty-five years of age, gave up that association, and for some years attended a Quaker meeting. "In later life," writes his son Herbert, "he separated himself still further from current opinions, ending, indeed, by agreeing in the religious views I had set forth." The mother, very little influenced by the intellectual development of her husband and her son, quietly held on her own way. In her journal, chapel news and preachers bulk largely. One of the entries would have held good for every Sunday in her grown-up life: "I should not like to miss going to chapel; it would not seem at all like Sunday." Her son Herbert was baptised at the Methodist Chapel, Derby, by the Rev. John Kershaw, on June 19, 1820. Whatever religious influence his mother and his early Methodist associations may have had upon him, and it appears to have been very slight, every trace of it was

gone while he was still little more than a boy. Nor does he seem at any time to have recalled with any wistful or affectionate feeling the faith that surrounded his childhood; differing in this respect from some who might be named, who, though they have travelled far from their early beliefs, recall them with a certain tenderness, and speak of them with sympathy and respect.

Although Spencer analyses his own mind and traces its history with great frankness, religion interested and occupied him so little that there is in his biography no very illuminating account of his movement from the position of a nominal Christian to that of a convinced agnostic, and we can only form our own judgment of the contributory causes. "The change had no marked stages," says his biographer, but he suggests two mental habits or characteristics that may partly explain it: "His disregard of authority, human or Divine," and "the idea of the universality of natural causation being confirmed, the idea of the supernatural, as ordinarily conceived, became

impossible to be entertained.” The former of these, we are persuaded, had much more to do with Spencer’s agnosticism than the latter. The habit of seeking for a cause for every phenomenon, to which Dr. Duncan refers, is in no way hostile to theistic belief. To many minds, indeed, it has furnished a line of thought and reasoning conducting to the belief in the First Cause, whose name is God. The late Lord Kelvin had at least as strong a grasp of the principle of causation as Mr. Spencer, yet found the idea of the supernatural by no means impossible to be entertained.

But the disposition to disregard authority was in Herbert Spencer of very early development, and continued with him through life, as his candid biographer bears witness. “In his childhood the tendency to set authority at nought was more than usually strong; the fitful nature of his father’s discipline and the gentleness of his mother’s sway exerting no efficient check on his self-will.” When he was thirteen years old, the uncle by whom he was being educated wrote to his parents, “He must part with

some of his confidence in his own judgment.” “Your faults arise from too high an opinion of your own attainments,” said his plain-spoken father. Under the discipline of a public school, and in free association with other boys, this feature of his character might have been corrected, but the kind of education he received—and at a very early period it became self-education—had no tendency that way. “Spencer’s angles were never ground down : they were acute angles always,” was said by one who knew him well. “His disposition was acknowledged by himself to be contentious ; I would venture to consider it also as being sometimes a little perverse,” writes another. Of this he was not unaware, for his own mind, and what he called the filiation of his ideas, were objects of close study with him. “Ours was essentially a *dissenting* family,” was an observation of his, and as regards the claims of religion he dissented first and last. Along with this pronounced mental habit his biographer refers to one of Spencer’s characteristics that not infrequently led him into error in matters of science, and which,

we are persuaded, had much to do with his summary rejection alike of revelation and of the theistic belief in its simplest form. Spencer would not listen to "the other side." His confidence in his own conclusions was absolute and unassailable. "More reading and less thinking—more observation and experiment, and less speculation—would have shaken his confidence in some of his conclusions." But he was as nearly indifferent to other men's opinions, and as unable to believe that where they differed from his own there yet might be something in them, as it is possible for a man to be. He says, "I never could read books the cardinal principles of which I rejected," and he would throw a book down at once when he disagreed with what he found in it. All this is made to appear very clearly in his biography. "This habit," says Dr. Duncan, "afforded some justification for the suggestion that he was unwilling to deal with arguments and facts opposed to his own views. . . . The fact was that, though his allegiance to the truth never wavered—not a single instance being known of his

declining to acknowledge as true what he believed to be true—he sometimes failed to reach it, *owing to the engrossment of his mind with the creations of his ever-active constructive imagination precluding the admission of alien ideas.*”

This last sentence—the italics are ours—means much, and accounts for a good deal. We can find no evidence in Mr. Spencer’s writings, or in the work of his able and well-informed biographer, that he ever faced with patience and reasonable humility the “alien ideas” that Christianity presents to the human mind and heart. His mind was prepossessed, and so well satisfied with its prepossessions that he gave no adequate consideration to the nature and claims of Christianity. When he says, “I hold, in common with most men who have studied the matter to the bottom, that the existence of a Deity can neither be proved nor disproved,” it is evident that he makes no account of that kind of proof which in all ages men of loftiest intellect and noblest nature have found to be sufficient. It is hard to say what sort of proof he is thinking

of, or to what faculties in man he would have that proof addressed. Had he been accustomed to consider more carefully the judgment of authors with whose main positions he disagreed, he might perhaps have come to see with Butler that the question is not whether the evidence of religion be what we wish it, but whether it be sufficient for the purpose for which it was intended. Mr. Spencer had not studied this matter "to the bottom"—his use of the expression is very suggestive, and prepares one for the result of his studies—or he would have found that there is more to be said for the existence of a Deity than is dreamt of in his philosophy.

With all its limitations, the intellect of Herbert Spencer was an extraordinarily powerful one; and, with all its angularities and acerbities, his disposition was a noble one. But that either the one or the other owed anything to agnosticism as a substitute for religion may be confidently denied. And there is nothing narrow or sectarian in the thought with which many readers will close this Biography—that the strong

character therein portrayed would have been at once stronger, comelier, and more complete had it been quickened and sustained by that Christian faith which lifts human nature to its highest and its best.

VII

A LATIN ANTHOLOGY

THE latest addition to the well-known Golden Treasury series is a *Latin Anthology*, containing the best of Latin lyric poetry, and such extracts from longer poems as possess in some measure the lyric character. The nature of the selection, and the convenient and pleasant form in which it is issued, will secure for this little volume a ready welcome from an "audience fit, though few."

Notwithstanding the claims of science to an ever-enlarging place in the scheme of modern education, classical literature has still a part to play in the cultivation of the human mind for which there is no substitute or effective rival. The reasons for this need not be given in detail. It is sufficient to say that the intellectual life of our race has

a history, and from that history, with its stages and sequences, no civilised people can detach itself. The Greeks and Romans still "rule us from their urns." They laid the foundations on which we have built. They first broke the soil we cultivate, and sowed the seed which lies at the root of the harvests of to-day.

It may be admitted that the great majority of those who benefit by this are unaware of the nature and extent of their obligations. In this respect it is with our intellectual as it is with our civil life—as, indeed, with our life in all its great aspects: "Other men laboured, and we are entered into their labours." Not every Englishman rejoicing in his liberty knows much about Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights, and what he owes to them. Not every lover of a book is aware of his debt to those

. . . . "Isles of Greece
Where grew the arts of war and peace,"

or to the Rome, by whom the intellectual wealth of the Greeks was handed on to

the modern world. One may be ignorant of all this and yet be an excellent citizen, and a genuine lover of literature. But while this is so, and the pedant scholar cannot be allowed to put forth a new *Quicunque Vult* under which no one can be saved without a knowledge of Latin and Greek, yet it is well to have at least some acquaintance with the classical languages and master-literatures to which we owe so much. In the case of a mind of ordinary sanity a little learning is *not* "a dangerous thing." On the contrary, it is a good and a pleasant thing, and is in every way better than none at all. "Small Latin and less Greek"—a quite insufficient equipment for a Professor or a Doctor of Divinity—is an advantage and a credit to the average man of any class or calling. It will widen his horizon, and put charm and colour into his mental landscape. To have even a slight acquaintance with the forms of thought and speech in which the great races of the past expressed themselves will touch the imagination, and deepen the sense of the wonder and many-

sidedness of human life. The professed scholar needs no advice in this matter, or, if he does, I am not competent to give it; but to the ordinary man of fair education, however busy a life he is called to lead, I would say, "Stick to what Latin and Greek you have, and renew your knowledge of it as occasion offers."

Few except scholars by profession retain in after years the niceties of scholarship in which their youth was drilled; but for such loss there is compensation in larger experience of life, and in the sympathy and insight which come with it. One could not, perhaps, at fifty face with comfort an examination that would have had no terrors in one's teens, and yet be able to read Horace and Virgil with pleasure and profit of which the earlier days knew nothing. Many an emancipated schoolboy who has said with Byron,

"Then farewell, Horace—whom I hated so,"

has lived to find, as Byron did, that Horace has fixed in the perfect expression of his enduring verse thoughts which life inevitably

suggests to every man; and that lines once associated with the drudgery of the schoolroom come to mind in after days with the aptness of a proverb, with the weight of an oracle, and with the charm of a remembered song. With all their limitations of thought and feeling, whether chargeable to the poet himself, or shared with the world to which he belonged, the Odes of Horace have been dear to fifty generations of statesmen, students, divines, and toilers in various fields. No one goes to them for the highest or the deepest things; but in the wide region that lies between, the region in which so much of our lives is spent, there are few wiser, kindlier, and more sensible companions to be found, companions, too, with an unfailing charm of manner and of style. To quote the words of Dean Wickham: "There is no collection of poems which has been so frequently quoted, and this is because there is none which has given such perfect expression to the elementary experiences and universal sentiments of the general readers of literature. The shortness of

life, the mutability of fortune, the delights of friendship . . . the rudimentary lessons of practical philosophy, patience, contentment, moderation; these are all touched again and again in phrases which catch the sense with their music and dwell in the memory from their terseness, simplicity, and happiness."

In any collection of Latin Lyrics Horace and Catullus must be the poets chiefly drawn upon. They all but divide the field between them, having no real rivals in this province of art. By an extension of the term to such passages in longer poems as have something of the lyrical quality, the Editor of this *Anthology* has been able to include extracts from the *De Rerum Naturâ* of Lucretius, from the *Georgics* and *Æneid* of Virgil, from Ovid and Seneca. He has added a few explanatory and critical notes that most readers will find useful.

In the Lyric Poetry of a people we have perhaps the final expression of its character and genius, completing the formal records of its history, and supplying the

interpretation of them. The *Short History* of Mr. J. R. Green, for example, passing quickly over the details of war and diplomacy, leads the reader into the common ways trodden by the English people century after century, putting him, as it were, into their midst, at their work and at their play, in such manner that they cease to be figures in a pageant, and we move amongst them as amongst our fellow-men. But if we look for something that shall show us their inmost life, the life of feeling and reflection, of love, and hope, and sorrow, and delight, we find it in such a collection of English song as Mr. Palgrave has gathered in his *Golden Treasury*, where, through its poets, the English people has given the deepest, the most unreserved, the final revelation of its mind and heart. And for this reason Mr. Palgrave's little volume furnishes some of the most precious materials we possess for the true history of our race.

This is true also, but in a considerably less degree, of the *Latin Anthology* before us. The lyric gift, the gift of impassioned

utterance in poetic form, was not possessed by the Latins in the measure that it has been given to the English. Lyric poetry was not with them a native growth. It had its origin and inspiration in the poetry of the Greeks, which was studied, imitated, and reproduced in Latin garb by Catullus and Horace, with such difference as another language and another atmosphere made inevitable, and the genius of the Latin poets could not fail to give. But it was not the growth of the soil, however successfully transplanted and acclimatised, and in this respect it is at a disadvantage when compared with the lyric poetry of the English. Further, it is no narrow or sectarian judgment that notes the immense influence of Christianity upon the moral and spiritual life of mankind, and consequently upon that class of poetry which springs most directly from the inner life, and expresses most fully its range of thought and quality of emotion. It need be no matter of surprise that Latin love poetry will not bear comparison in tenderness, depth, and purity with that of our own

language. For Horace's odes of love it is impossible to claim the merit of sincerity. They are literary exercises, very skilful, playing with the subject with the ease and gentle irony so dear to an accomplished man of the world, just the sort of thing to read to a few admiring friends who were perfectly familiar with the sentiments and tone adopted, and able to appreciate their exquisite felicity and finish. But they are not serious, and he is not in earnest. He can say pretty things to Lalage and to Phyllis, and pay elegant compliments to Glycera or Barine, but there is not in it all a touch of the burning passion of Catullus, still less of the deep and manly affection that breathes in many an English lyric. His Odes tell us better than many pages of formal history how men thought of women—men who were not the worst, but among the best of their time—before love had been born again into a new and better life by the coming of Jesus Christ. Our English love poems are not free from stain or blot, but there is to be found in them tenderness, purity,

devotion—we may say, reverence, of which the poets of the “creed outworn” knew nothing.

One thing I would suggest to the reader who knows how to handle this volume, and, on occasion, to turn to the larger stores from which it is compiled. Let him observe how the thought of death weighed upon the best pagan minds, and note the hopeless tone in which it is ever referred to. To do so will perhaps interpret to him afresh the words, “Who all their lifetime were subject to bondage through fear of death.” Again and again the same note is heard. Death the inevitable; death that no strength can resist, no wealth can bribe; death that conquers the bravest and does not spare the coward; pale death that with impartial foot knocks at the doors of poor men’s hovels and the palaces of kings; you must leave house, and land, and lovely wife; your heir will spend your wealth; no prayers, no piety will avail; you must go where good Æneas, Tullus, Ancus went; *Pulvis et umbra sumus*—we are dust and a shadow.

Catullus in the spring-time of his glowing youth will love while he can, for

“Suns will rise and set again ;
But for us when once doth wane
This poor short-abiding light,
We must sleep in endless night.”

Nothing can surpass in their hopeless sorrow—perhaps no one can adequately translate—the lines in which he takes a last farewell of his dead brother, lines that die away with the sobbing wail of

Atque in perpetuum frater ave atque vale,

farewell, farewell for ever. This was the note to which all came at last. Perpetual night. *Mors ultima linea est*—Death is the end of all things.

It may be admitted that these are great commonplaces that men will never cease to repeat, because they express one great and obvious aspect of things. That is so, and in our English poetry they find frequent expression. One instance may be taken for many, Shakespeare's

“Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

.

The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust."

But, true as this is, it is for Christians, it was for Shakespeare, over-spanned and dominated by a larger truth. Take Shakespeare again :

"So shalt thou feed on death that feeds on men,
And death once dead, there's no more dying then."

It may be confidently said that English poetry, in its main and highest utterances, is full of the hope of eternal life. A hundred illustrations might be given. Let one or two suffice :

"So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high
Through the dear might of Him Who walked the waves."
MILTON.

"They are all gone into the world of light,
And I alone sit lingering here."—HENRY VAUGHAN.

"Say not Good Night—but in some brighter clime
Bid me Good Morning."—BARBAULD.

"For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."—TENNYSON.

We pay tribute of admiration, gratitude, it may be of love, to the master-spirits of

ancient pagan literature ; but in respect of the “good hope of everlasting life” we may say of their greatest and their best, “He that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.”

VIII

SECOND-HAND BOOK CATALOGUES

A SECOND-HAND Book Catalogue generally affords a book-lover excellent reading. It touches him on the side of his favourite pursuits and fancies, appealing to his memory, to his imagination, to his honest covetousness in various pleasant ways. It brings to him old friends and acquaintances, familiar titles, books with great histories—the “volumes paramount” of universal literature, and along with them the ragged company of camp-followers and hangers-on ; books that time cannot wither, and others that it cannot ripen or promote ; books that have a name to live, but which no one reads or ever will read, and others that renew their life to successive generations by virtue of a certain unquenchable vitality. Books one loves, or likes, or dislikes are

to be found there, the companions or the bugbears of one's youth, the teachers, friends, or objects of aversion of later years. What associations are awakened as one turns its pages ! All that one knows of history and of human thought may be touched and stirred in a moment. Those quaint and curious titles—how suggestive they are of old-world learning and intellectual methods ; of forgotten issues, and controversies whose very ashes are cold ; of discarded philosophies and theologies, of discredited histories and superannuated science. The prose may be now unreadable, and the verse intolerable, but here they are, after a century, or two, or three, braving it out in a catalogue, and ready at a word to be yours, almost at your own price.

Book Catalogues are of many sorts of classes ; for the world of books has its provinces and departments, its periods, divisions, and subdivisions ; and catalogues are specialised accordingly, so that you may know at a glance into what regions you will be led, and what you are likely to meet with. One dealer makes a speciality of

early-printed books, another of theology, of travel, of art, etc. For there is division of labour in this sphere of things, as in others, experience and skill being concentrated upon this or that class of books, with the result that a catalogue is often of considerable bibliographic interest and value. Those who are given to book-hunting are well aware of the difference between one catalogue and another, not only in respect of their contents, but of the knowledge and bookish feeling they represent. There are catalogues that are literature themselves, productions of a wholly different order from the Lists of Remainders of last season's novels, and miscellaneous bargains that we know so well. I receive such lists from time to time in which books are wrongly described, words mis-spelt, foreign words, especially, being reduced to deplorable hash, everything showing that the compiler had better have been cataloguing ironmongery or farm-produce. The best catalogues are scrupulously accurate, and reveal in various ways the spirit of the expert and the enthusiast, of one who possesses the knowledge

proper to his craft, with the touch of emotion that lifts the business of book-collecting into the sphere of art and devotion.

There is a world of meaning or of suggestion in the prices asked for old books—prices high enough to take away one's breath, and low enough to amaze and to amuse us. As a rule books decline in money value as time goes on, and for obvious reasons. The majority of books published are not of permanent interest, and, after a while, demand for them practically ceases. Or, if they are books of something like abiding worth, they are republished in cheap and ever cheaper forms, to the depreciation of earlier editions. The admirable reprints of good literature of all classes now being issued have greatly reduced the price of books that a few years ago were more or less costly. Now is the time for those who prefer the older and statelier editions to obtain them. They never were so cheap before, and I hope they will never be cheaper than they are now.

But the rule of decline in prices has many exceptions, due to various causes. For

a book to be *scarce* is the usual explanation of its maintaining its price, or even increasing in value. For it to be *very scarce* will account, according to its class, for a *very* high price, until you come to the Folio Shakespeares, the Valdarfer *Boccaccio*, the *Biblia Pauperum*, and Caxton's *Golden Legende*, when you have to think in thousands, till there is no more spirit left in you.

There are other reasons for the high prices that certain books will bring. Good specimens from renowned presses, such as that of Aldus of Venice, Froben of Basle, the Etiennes and Simon Colines of Paris, the Elzevirs, Plantin of Antwerp, and Baskerville of Birmingham, are greatly prized by collectors, both on historic grounds and for their typographic excellence and interest; and though taste in these matters varies from time to time, they will continue to command good prices. First editions of notable books are among the costliest in the market. Would you like a copy of the first edition of the *Paradise Lost*? In a catalogue now before me "A fine copy and genuine throughout" is offered for £200.

It illustrates the irony of things to add that the whole amount received by the poet for the first three editions was £17! I cannot say what would be the price for a first edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, of which, I believe, only one copy is known to exist. But for a copy of the ninth edition twelve guineas is asked. You may easily buy for a shilling a readable copy of Butler's *Hudibras*, but if you must have a first edition, I know of a fine copy to be had for sixty guineas. *Robinson Crusoe* is another popular classic that has passed through innumerable editions, and may be bought for a few pence. It was originally published in three parts in 1719-20. A complete set of these first issues is now offered by Messrs. Sotheran & Co. for £225.

The pursuit of first editions constitutes a distinct branch of book-collecting, but it is, in my judgment, one that tends to bring the gentle art into contempt. In the case of immensely influential books with a great history, books that have affected national character or given a lasting turn to religious or philosophic thought, a reason-

able interest does attach to the form in which they first appeared. In this shape it came into the world; with this paper, type, and binding it was first seen and handled; this is the page on which, for the first time, were seen the words—

“Of Man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe.”

Or :

“As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep : and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream.”

I cannot read these lines without hearing their music—

“God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages ” ;

and the sound, as of flutes and hautboys, with which Bunyan’s sweet drama of the Pilgrim-life begins. For two centuries and a half this music has not ceased. “Its sound has gone out through all the earth.” It has kept the English language alive in both hemispheres, guarding it from dete-

rioration and decay, and, better service still, calling English hearts to highest things, with infinite power to strengthen and to soothe.

No, the first copies of the *Paradise Lost* and the *Pilgrim's Progress* are sacred things ; and, if they can be bought, it is no case for

“ the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more.”

But when it comes to the fastidious collection of first editions as such, of, say, Greville's *Journals*, or *Omar Khayyám*, or Warren's *Ten Thousand a Year*, the spell is broken, and the pursuit may be left to those whose joy it is to follow fashion in its various crazes.

I have sometimes, with the help of railway time tables and tourist guides, amused myself by taking imaginary journeys to all manner of desirable places, visiting the Zambesi or the Pyramids, Damascus or Peking, in half an hour. But the mental flights and journeys that can be taken from the pages of a catalogue of books afford a keener pleasure. Lands that have never

been mapped, boundless regions of imagination and fancy, lie about us in the great world of books, and “swim into our ken” as we utter the names of the great masters of literature; for theirs is the spell that lays them open to our sight, and makes us free of the vast and glorious domain.

IX

IN AN OLD SCOTTISH GARDEN

I AM spending a holiday week in an old country house in the East of Scotland. Centuries have passed since its massive walls were built, and its gables first pointed to the sky. Generations, I know not how many, have come and gone since these stalwart oaks, and wide-spreading beeches, and shady sycamores were planted, some in long-drawn avenues, some in clumps, and others in solitary state. Five miles away is an old county town that clings to its traditions of Royal residence long ago, and now makes money in a quiet, decorous way out of certain modern factories of which the vanished Royalties assuredly never dreamt. Within the grounds lying near the house are the scanty fragments of a castle, once grim and proud, but now

brought down indeed. More than three hundred years ago it was deliberately and thoroughly destroyed by order of the King. Some of its stones were used to build the house in which I am now a guest. Others, I doubt not, might be found in the walls of farms and cottages and cattle-byres for miles around. For a dismantled castle is a fine quarry, as the shrewd ancestors of the shrewd people now living in Mearns and Angus well knew. It has been the fate of well-hewn stones everywhere and in all time to do duty again and again, sometimes promoted, and at others put to base uses ; serving in turn, it may be, to strengthen a robbers' den, to furnish material for a lordly manor-house, or keep the ploughman's children snug and warm in winter, or even—to this complexion may it come at last—hollowed into a trough where cattle drink or swine are fed.

The names of village, hamlet, and estate in this part of the world are strange to a Southern ear ; but we have a Gaelic scholar in our party who smoothes them out for us and assists our efforts to pronounce them.

Here is a string of ancient and euphonious names: Balgavies, Aberlemno, Rescobie, Restenneth, Kirriemuir, Cortachie. There is music in every one of them, and abundant suggestion of romantic history and tradition. What an old land it is that we live in! How many strains of ancient blood meet in our veins! Gael, Briton, Norseman, Dane, Saxon, with a touch of Roman, and more than a touch of the Norman—all are there, in our veins as in our speech. Not a square mile in this part of Scotland that has not heard the war-cry and been the scene of battle, murder, and sudden death. Hardly a small town where Established and United Free Churches now minister orthodox Presbyterianism in friendly competition, but once paid tithes to the neighbouring monastery, or refused to pay them, and took the consequences at the hands of Bishop, or Abbot, or secular champion of the Church's rights. How clean gone it all is—that clergy-world with its virtues and vices, its learning and splendour, its charities, its exactions, its claim to the best of earth and all of heaven. The ruined tower of Restenneth

Priory now stands solitary among thick encircling trees, but church, cloister, refectory, dormitory have hardly left a trace of themselves among the bushes and long grass that cover the marshy soil. Within the mouldering walls of Dunkeld and Arbroath Cathedrals there are grassy graves. Birds build their nests where once were stately altars, and on rough nights the wind moans and whistles among broken arches and shattered pillars. The tides of life flow now in other channels, and they bear us with them. But in this old garden it is natural to think of the past. "It comes when we do call." In no more fitting place can day-dreams be summoned, or evening fancies be indulged. It has been a garden for at least two hundred years. The high encompassing walls are weather-stained and moss-grown. The long walks, of softest, greenest turf, have been rolled and trimmed and shorn since Queen Anne's time.

After the dusty road or crunching gravel, these smooth and silent paths, on which no sound of footfall can be heard, seem to

forbid all restless or hurried movement. The solemn shrubs, standing at measured intervals on either side like sentinels, would disapprove. The sundial, set where the long green alleys intersect, would be affronted by noise or mirth. For this is an ancient garden, and a gentle, antique spirit broods upon it, not gloomy or forbidding, but such as moves the mind to quiet thoughts, to memories of the past, and tranquil meditation upon the deeper things of life. The long years that have made the garden what it is, have subtly impressed themselves on the great trees, the grassy walks, the thick hedges of box and juniper, on the fruit trees that cling to the walls, and even on the gay flowers themselves. Beneath the fresh, full life of this summer's day is another and underlying life drawn from a time long past. Year by year the gardener and his men have wrought with spade, and hoe, and pruning-knife. They have grown old at their work, have died, and been succeeded by their sons. The world outside has had its wars and revolutions, its great catastrophes and far-reaching changes. Cam-

paigns with France, the Jacobite Rebellion, the conquest of India, the breaking away of the American Colonies, the French Revolution, the struggle with Napoleon—their “drums and tramlings” have shaken the very earth, but have not disturbed the garden’s peace. This yew tree is older than the House of Hanover; that hedge was planted in the reign of William and Mary; those walks were cut when Pope was laying out his grounds at Twickenham; that handsome Spanish chestnut dates from the year of Waterloo. As surely as a church or manor-house can take on the mellow hues of time, so surely can a garden that is loved and cared for by successive generations acquire the gentle dignity of age. In this sphere of things, as in some others, time is a ripener and a perfecter, not a destroyer. No friend like an old friend, no book like an old book, no garden like an old garden.

And this old garden has now been mine for a week or more; for there is a kind of proprietorship not confined to the lawful owner, but given—I use the words with reverence—to them for whom it is prepared.

It is yours or mine if we love it, if we understand it, if we feel its charm, and respond to its intimations, for

“ there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress.”

It is a garden, too, that does not resent the book one carries in one's hand. Amid some scenes, in presence of some objects of nature or of art, you must not read a book. To do so is a discourtesy, almost an insult. But it is not so here. I think the old garden likes a book-lover, as having in him, presumably, something that is not altogether worldly, and as being, usually, a harmless and gentle-minded person. Upon one thing only the genius of the place insists. Newspapers and novels are forbidden. Those may be read in a railway carriage, in a tramcar, on the sands at a watering-place, but to this sanctuary of peace, where all is beautiful and nothing is vulgar, harsh, or restless, one should bring such books as are in keeping with it, a matter on which the instinct of a true book-lover will instruct him. The Book of Psalms, the Odes of

Horace, *The Golden Treasury*, Milton's Minor Poems, the *Essays of Elia*, and Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands*, were my companions in the Old Garden.

Short intervals of retreat, with the conditions of leisure nicely adjusted to one's temperament and taste, are of priceless value in the scheme of life, especially to one who must needs be much in public, who has to hear his own voice more, perhaps, than is good for him, and feels that amid too numerous activities and excitements there is danger of losing the fine edge of thought and feeling.

A verse from a kindly minor poet may serve by way of epilogue :—

“But sweeter far in this old Garden close

To loiter 'mid the lovely, old-time flowers,

To breathe the scent of Lavender and Rose,

And with old poets pass the peaceful hours.

Old Gardens and old poets—happy he

Whose quiet summer days are spent in such sweet
company !”

JOHN RUSSELL HAYES.

X

SNOWED UP NEAR AMBLESIDE

IT is my fortune at this moment—my good fortune, I may say—to be snowed up on a hill-side at the north end of Lake Windermere. There is no hardship in this, nothing to call forth the sympathy of my friends, but rather their envy. The stone walls that shelter me “do not a prison make,” but a rest-house, a place of refuge where indoor comfort is heightened and intensified by the wild weather outside. From an engagement in the neighbourhood I came here two days ago to spend a night with a cheery, hospitable friend, thinking to go on to Penrith next morning. But the snow-storm through which I then made my way with difficulty was but tuning its orchestra for one of those great performances in which earth and sky and wind and

snow take their parts with overwhelming power and impressiveness. During the last forty-eight hours there have been changes in key and tone, but the storm concert has never ceased, moving through various stages of beauty, solemnity, and sternness. Sometimes the gloom lifts, and through the pale, cold air the lower lands across the lake are visible, with the high shoulder of Wetherlam dimly seen beyond. Then the air thickens and darkens again, the mountains disappear, the landscape is blotted out, and the snow whirls and drives before the howling north wind. It is no use thinking of going out of doors. The snow is near two feet deep within a few yards of the threshold. The steep, winding lane up which one must toil to my friend's house is all but full from bank to bank, with drifts here and there whose depth can only be guessed at. So I am a prisoner, a happy prisoner, in the snuggest and warmest of houses, and my jailer—may I be forgiven for using the word of such a kindly gentleman—grows in cheerfulness as the storm continues, piling fresh logs on the fire, and moving hither and

thither on hospitable ministries of various kinds.

“*O, Ter Quaterque beatus!*” I dare not have thought of taking a holiday just now, so busy am I, but here is holiday in spite of myself and all my arrangements—a holiday made for me, thrust upon me, insisted on by powers that must needs be obeyed. Conscience—lingering, faintly-protesting conscience—is disarmed and at ease. It is not I that failed to keep my appointment at Penrith last night. The matter was taken out of my poor hands by the North Wind, and the Polar Currents, and the vexed spirits of the Upper Air, and by the angry giants around that wrestle with the storm—Helvellyn, and the Langdale Pikes, and Scawfell, and their brethren. If all these agree to block the roads, and stop the coaches, and pile the snowdrifts over the footways, who am I to say them nay? So here am I in my friend’s snug home in Skelghyll Woods, with good companionship, and an easy-chair by the fireside, and books to hand, and comforts that meet the whole scale of human requirements.

I have known this famous region for more than forty years. My past visits to it are among my happiest memories, touched, as in all such cases, with associations tender and pathetic. With old scenes are linked old friends. The scenes remain, but the friends are gone. I have walked these roads and climbed these hills with companions who will never come together again "till all the ship's company meet." And the unchanging hills, the scenery that preserves its features age after age, only make one feel more deeply by contrast the brief duration of human life and earthly happiness. To come back again to well-remembered places, when those who once shared them with us

"are all gone into the world of light,"

touches thought and feeling to their depths, and makes life itself seem shadowy and dreamlike. I have been thinking of James Smetham, and of summer days that he and I spent at Easedale and under Silver How, and of the long twilights that followed, when, after many a jest and story, the spirit of evening calm prevailed, and from

the shy recesses of the soul his most sacred beliefs and hopes found utterance. No cloud then lay upon his bright and beautiful nature. His genius moved swift and free on the high levels where it mainly dwelt, and I had little to do but listen and be happy.

But I have other friends whose memory belongs to this fair region, friends whose faces I never saw, but friends none the less. Nowhere else on English ground have more gifted men and brighter women made their homes and lived their lives. Residents in the Lake District may change from year to year. You may look for one who lived at Rydal or at Grasmere a while ago, and you cannot find him. He has removed, or he is dead. But there are permanent inhabitants, perpetually resident spirits, who never remove, and do not die—Wordsworth, and his incomparable sister, Dorothy ; Coleridge—the inspired, halting, troubled Coleridge, and his gentle, helpless, ineffectual son, Hartley, and noble-hearted daughter Sara ; and Southey, best of bookmen and gentlemen ; and De Quincey, and Christopher

North, and Thomas Arnold, and Frederick Faber, and Felicia Hemans, and Edward and Dora Quillinan; did I not make acquaintance with all these long ago? Have I not found them here whenever I came? But never before did I visit this home of theirs in winter. I have seen it in all the moods of our uncertain summers, but never until now have I seen it ridden by a winter storm, swept by icy blasts from the north, and wrapped in the white garment of the deep and silent snow. It is winter here, as they knew it, and others, the old, the immortal inhabitants who have made it a classic land, a place of pilgrimage, a haunt for studies and meditations to so many of us, and I am glad to have looked upon the wildness and the beauty of a great snow-storm among the Lakes, as they have often done.

But while I have been writing, the wind has dropped, the snow has ceased to fall, there is peace beneath and in the upper air. The distances that were hidden appear once more. I can see Bowfell and Conistone Old Man. The sun has come forth, has illumined for a little while the white earth,

and has set in all the pomp of gold and scarlet, leaving a purple horizon behind. Venus, brilliant for an hour after sunset, is now following her lord, and is out of sight. And so, after storm comes quiet, and after warfare peace.

XI

BISHOP BUTLER AND JOHN WESLEY A COMPARISON AND A CONTRAST

BUTLER and Wesley were the two greatest, most influential men in the English Church of the eighteenth century. Unlike in the structure of their minds, and in the type of their religious character, in the lives they lived, and in the service they rendered to mankind, it will be found interesting and instructive to compare and to contrast them one with another. Their very greatness, each in his own order; the fact that each is the chief representative in the history of English Christianity of certain gifts and qualities—the one the greatest of philosophic divines, the other the foremost of religious leaders; the fact that, starting from different points of view, and working in totally different ways, they were really workers together in a great reformation—

these considerations make it inevitable that we should, sooner or later, bring them together in the field of vision, and make some sort of comparison of the men and of their labours. We shall find that, while the differences are many and striking, there are some important points of resemblance.

Butler was born in 1692, and died in 1752, and thus belongs to the first half of the eighteenth century. Wesley was born in 1703, and died in 1791. His light arose as that of Butler declined. His active career ranges from 1740 to 1790. Butler was the son of a tradesman, and a Nonconformist, was educated at a Dissenting academy, and afterwards at the University of Oxford. He was not, however, an Oxford man in the sense that Wesley was. When he entered the University he was twenty-two years of age, already a scholar and a thinker, and with the bent of his genius fully formed. He found little that commended itself to him either in the life or the studies of Oxford, and complains of the "frivolous lectures and unintelligible disputations in which he was obliged to misspend his time." But Butler

was not the man whom a great University could forget, or fail to claim, as her own. A most distinguished Oxford man of later times, Professor Mansel, left it as his deliberate judgment that "sound religious philosophy will flourish or fade within her walls according as she perseveres or neglects to study the works and cultivate the spirit of her great son and teacher, Bishop Butler." Cradled in Nonconformity, a Dissenter until he was twenty-one years of age, Butler became Rector of Stanhope; Dean of St. Paul's; Bishop, first of Bristol, and then of the princely See of Durham; the pride of the ancient University of Oxford; and a chief glory of the Church of England.

How different was Wesley's course! A clergyman's son, born and bred in a parsonage, educated at Charterhouse, he entered the University at seventeen years of age, and there, as scholar, fellow, and tutor, spent the next dozen years of his life; studious, devout, and churchly, the very type and pattern of the Oxford man as the pious founders of Colleges conceived him, and Anglican biography has often por-

trayed him. Then came the great break in his career, and the new departure—itinerating, field-preaching, and all else that is involved in the word Methodism; the founder of a religious community which, after a century and a half, is spread through all the world, rivalling in numbers those of the Anglican Church in all her branches; his name for generations an offence and an abomination to his Alma Mater, until in later days she came to see that he, too, was one of her greatest sons.

The bent of Butler's mind and the character of the work in which his life was to be spent were fixed almost from his boyhood. He was still a pupil in the academy of Mr. Jones, of Tewkesbury, when he corresponded anonymously with Dr. Samuel Clarke on his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*. He was but twenty-six years of age when he was appointed preacher at the Rolls Chapel. There he preached the *Sermons* second only in value to the *Analogy* itself, from three of which Sir James Mackintosh declared that he had learnt all his philosophy. Had Butler died at thirty-

five he would have ranked amongst our greatest philosophical divines. Had Wesley died at thirty-five it is questionable whether we should ever have heard of him. There is much food for thought in the contrasts of early and of late development furnished by distinguished men, as well as in the differences of circumstance under which some men strike into their life-work at once, while others only find it after long waiting and preparation. The materials for a biography of Butler are very scanty. Though he occupied high positions, his was the life of a student and a thinker, the processes and movements of his mind being the important, and outward incidents the insignificant, parts of his history. The three men of the eighteenth century with whom, perhaps, we are best acquainted are Johnson, Cowper, and Wesley—Johnson because he had a Boswell; Cowper because he wrote letters; and Wesley because he kept a journal. Wesley, in particular, lived in public and had many attached and admiring friends to hand on the tradition of his personality. Moreover, he was communicative about his

inmost self. He wrote his own spiritual history at length and in much detail, and conversed about it freely. Frank, without vanity; introspective, yet not morbid; thinking it his duty to record his experience of religion and life, he is amongst the best known of men.

In all this Butler is the exact opposite. He lived much alone, was never married, was reserved in disposition, and reticent in speech. His writings contain the least possible amount of self-discovery, and the traditions concerning him are few and vague. Two touches of personal description that have come down to us are peculiarly welcome. Surtees, in his *History of Durham*, says: "During the performance of the sacred office a divine animation seemed to pervade his whole manner, and lighted up his pale, wan countenance like a torch glimmering in its socket." The other is given by Hutchison in his *County History*: "He was of a most reverend aspect; his face thin and pale; but there was a divine placidness which inspired veneration and expressed the most benevolent mind. His

white hair hung gracefully on his shoulders, and his whole figure was patriarchal." Butler was but sixty years of age, it should be remembered, when he died. Wesley, when eighty years old, is described by one who saw him as "cheerful, yet grave, with every mark of the most severe tranquillity, with a head as white as snow, suggesting an idea of something primitive and apostolic."

Although Butler was well provided for through life, and in his later years possessed great revenues, he was well-nigh as simple and self-denying in his habits, and as generous in his gifts, as Wesley himself. In neither of them was there any strain of the sordid or selfish. In temperament they were altogether dissimilar. Each was grave, but the gravity of Wesley brightened habitually into cheerfulness, while that of Butler constantly deepened into gloom. It is not that Butler was morose; the fact that he was greatly beloved by his few intimate friends contradicts that view. But he was indisposed to multiply acquaintances, and appears to have regarded human affairs with a melancholy sense of the preponderance of

evil, and the comparative ineffectiveness of any effort to improve them. Doubtless this temperament was not unconnected with his bodily constitution. He died a worn old man before completing his sixtieth year. Wesley, on the other hand, thanked God that he found himself as strong to labour when he was over eighty years of age as he had been forty years before. It would be unwise to overlook such facts as these when comparing the melancholy of Butler with the cheerfulness of Wesley.

Butler and Wesley were profoundly impressed, each in his own way, by the irreligiousness of the age in which they lived. Perhaps, considering the amount of evil always in existence, the expression just used may need some justification. It is not the mere amount of irreligion and vice in a community that must be taken into account in forming a judgment upon its character. We must ask what is the prevailing tone of public opinion in respect of those evils; what are the accepted standards of conduct; what kind and what amount of rebuke do grave evils encounter from the general con-

science, and what effective opposition do they meet with ; and, especially, what is the strength of the moral and spiritual forces which the community possesses, and on which, ultimately, its welfare depends ? A society with a comparatively light calendar, say, of crime, but destitute of spiritual conviction and aspirations, may be in a worse way than one in which the obvious evils are more striking, but where there are elements of spiritual life whose influence may be reckoned upon to counteract and, possibly, overcome them. Judged in the light of considerations like these, the age of Butler and Wesley deserves the character, generally given to it, of an irreligious age. Not merely did gross evils abound, but there was no adequate and effective protest from any quarter, no one element in the nation's life to which one could turn with confidence and hope as giving promise of better things. Such salt as there was had little savour. The decay of the Church was even more serious than the depravity of the nation, just as the incompetence of physicians and the absence of remedies may be a graver

matter than the mere prevalence of disease—disease which, under happier conditions, might be in part cured, and in part prevented.

Butler and Wesley, as I have said, were alike in recognising the character of the times they lived in. But, with this agreement between Butler and Wesley, there is a very great difference in the character of the impression made upon them respectively, and in the results to which it led. The aspect of irreligion which Butler's mind was formed to feel, perhaps, most of all, was its unreasonableness. Here were men who had never seriously considered the matter, taking for granted that religion was not true, that there was nothing in it, and that its claims and warnings might be safely neglected. They were behaving as though it had been discovered to be fictitious, when no such discovery had been made; as though they had furnished some disproof of its authority, when they had done nothing of the kind. On the very lowest ground there was much to be said for it, and they were acting as though it were admitted that nothing could

be said for it. There was even *prima facie* probability that it was true, and further evidence going a good deal beyond that. What was to be thought, then, of persons who, in an off-hand way, decided concerning a matter of such importance as religion that it could not be true, when they might easily satisfy themselves that that was by no means certain? Was not this utterly irrational?

Butler was shocked by the unreasonableness of such conduct. His grave, devout mind was wounded and distressed by it. What coarse vulgarity is to a refined nature, what discord is to a sensitive ear, what begging the question is to a logical mind, this confident assumption that religion is not true was to Butler. He observed it with silent disapproval in the brilliant society he occasionally entered. He detected it as the underlying ground or principle of the general ungodliness, and it moved him almost to despair. The subject followed him into his retirement, and hung heavy upon him in his studies and meditations. What could he do to bring about a better state of things? Could anything, indeed, be done? It might

be feared but little, compared with the extent of the evil. He was not sanguine as to the general improvement of the nation, but at least he would do what he could, and the cast of his mind and the nature of his gifts and acquirements determined his line of effort. *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, is his contribution to the reformation that he longed for, and to Christian philosophy for all time. He does not undertake to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. Strictly speaking, demonstrative proof is not available in such a case, and if it were, there is no reason to think that those who neglect the evidence there is would be influenced even by proof demonstrative. In Butler's judgment, the ordinary evidences of Christianity were sufficient, if attended to. But what of those who did not attend to them, and yet practically took for granted that they furnished no proof at all? Well, he would demonstrate—yes, demonstrate—the unreasonableness of an irreligion that rested on such a false assumption. It was not certain that “there was nothing in it”

(religion). This and the other difficulty did not prove that it could not be true. Nay, the difficulties alleged were very similar to others with which we are familiar in the natural order, where we are accustomed to deal with them, giving them their due weight, and no more. Difficulties notwithstanding, we act as experience and probability suggest. A man who refused to act upon anything less than demonstrative proof would really cut himself off from acting at all, for, in the sphere of action, that kind of proof is not forthcoming. Now, where is the ground for supposing that “difficulties”—*i.e.* objections to the credibility of religion—are fatal, when we know that “difficulties”—*i.e.* objections which, prior to experience, might be brought against the credibility of the natural order—are not fatal? If religion proceeds from Him Who is the Author of nature, may we not expect to find “difficulties” in the one corresponding to those we meet with in the other; and is it not reasonable to think that we ought to deal with both in the same practical way, and not stand out for proofs and

explanations, which certainly are not given to us in that constitution and course of nature of which every one has some experience? If, then, you have disproved the case for religion, you may rightly reject its claims; but if the case is far from being disproved, if it is probably true, you are bound in reason to act in due consideration of it—that is as though it were true.

I have no intention of giving even the barest outline of Butler's argument, but one or two observations may be allowed. The weight he assigns to "probable evidence," the inference he draws from the "probability" of Christianity being true, have brought upon him much censure from critics, some of whom, at least, might have been expected to understand his meaning. It is, of course, easy to take up this word "probability," and make it ridiculous to a popular assembly by saying, "We want something more than 'probability.'" How can any one believe in a probable God, or enjoy a probable salvation?" And Butler is blamed and pitied for making "probability" rather than "assurance" his watchword. But the

applause secured at Butler's expense, and the glow of satisfaction experienced by an audience that is invited to look down upon a man like Butler, are not fairly earned. It is still necessary to rescue the word probability from *ad captandum* interpretation, and emphasise Butler's definition of probable evidence as "admitting of degrees, from the slightest presumption to the highest moral certainty." How much mischief has been done in religion by undertakings to demonstrate what cannot be demonstrated, and so exposing truths that have another, their own kind of proof, to unnecessary perils and humiliations! The remedy for scepticism is not to decry probability and promise demonstration, but rather to show what is the number and weight of the probabilities which raise the evidence for Christianity to "the highest moral certainty."

Another thing may be said. There is no writer in whose case it is more necessary than in that of Butler to bear in mind the limits of his argument as laid down by himself. We are so accustomed to find even great thinkers going beyond the logical limits

of an argument, that one who rigorously abstains from doing so is liable to be misunderstood. Butler has often been blamed for that which is his great merit—logical consistency. He would use no line of reasoning that lay outside his argument. If his conclusions seem moderate even to meagreness, it should be remembered that they are not the whole of his conclusions on the subject—for which they are sometimes mistaken—but only those that rest on certain premises or principles carefully laid down at the beginning. But if eager souls, already convinced, and more than convinced, of the truth of Christianity, complain that the argument of the *Analogy* is pitched too low, that it is wanting in boldness, and is deficient in enthusiasm, addressed rather to showing that Christianity *may* be true, than that it *is* true, they are, in fact, expressing their preference for work of another kind than that which Butler undertook to do. Now, it is always open to a man to say that he prefers Spurgeon's *Sermons* to Butler's *Analogy*, but he really should not blame the *Analogy* for not possessing the qualities of

the *Sermons*, any more than another should disparage the *Sermons* for not possessing the quality of the *Analogy*. Butler knew what he was doing. He would at least show the untenableness of the position so generally adopted in his day, and more generally in our own day than is supposed—that of a colourless deism combined with practical ungodliness. Within the limits which he assigned himself he was absolutely victorious. His argument, as a whole, has never been answered. It is safe to say it never will be answered. He was neither a Revivalist nor a Reformer; but neither Revival nor Reformation can dispense with such service as Butler rendered in defence of religion. If his work did not tell directly and immediately, like that of Wesley, it has told none the less surely, and the influence of the two defenders of the faith will, in my judgment, continue to run together till the end of time.

The life-work of Wesley presents a striking contrast to that of Butler in the fact that it had its root and motive in his personal history. Wesley's "conversion" at thirty-

five years of age sent him on his great career. In later life, as is well known, he modified the sharpness of the language in which he had stated that up to that time he was never converted to God. "I had even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son." But, in any case, the clear apprehension of salvation by faith in Christ, which Wesley then attained, was the greatest qualification for his labours as an evangelist. The change wrought in him was both sudden and lasting. Seldom has a dividing line been more sharply drawn between a man's earlier and later self, between his first aims and efforts and those to which his life was subsequently devoted. His was the soul in which, at ripe manhood, the religious movement known as Methodism was born, and in which, for the fifty years that followed, its spiritual life had its type and pattern.

Now, there is nothing corresponding to this in the case of Butler. So far as we know, there was no break, no new departure, no line of division separating an earlier from a later self. Both intellectually and religiously, he seems to have grown and ripened

exactly as might have been expected. No human foresight could have perceived in Wesley at thirty years of age the Founder of "the people called Methodists"; but it is hardly too much to say that in Butler, while yet in his teens, the future author of the *Analogy* could be already recognised.

If we pursue the examination, the points of contrast increase in number. Butler was essentially a thinker of the profoundly meditative kind, naturally drawn to consideration of the gravest subjects, and that in their underlying principles rather than in their immediate forms, shrinking from society, and finding his chief pleasures and pains in reflection and meditation. Wesley, on the other hand, was characteristically a man of action, drawn towards human affairs, and far stronger in dealing with them than in abstract investigation, or the pursuit of ideas. His grasp of facts was strong, his taste for speculation slight. He dealt with the great predestinarian controversy, for example, but only on its practical side. He taught Christian Perfection, and while he left unanswered questions which a theological student in his

first year might raise, he set thousands of men and women in pursuit of it, many of whom either found it or something that might well bear the name. Like most other strong men engaged in great undertakings, he cut the knots he could not untie, and could scarcely interest himself in a speculative difficulty when a practical solution was at hand. If his philosophy leaves something to desire, his logic is admirable. And he did not reason in the air. If a conclusion was logically sound, it must be capable of verification. He had no liking for those pleasant logical fictions which will not bear the test of experiment and practice. His theology knew no distinction akin to that between "pure" and "applied" mathematics. The only "*quod erat demonstrandum*" for which he greatly cared, was that which was furnished by practical results. This habit of mind gives their value to his theological writings, and also sets the limits to their value.

Unlike Butler, he lived much among his fellow men, and the relation towards them which came easiest to him was that of leadership. "No such leader of men

appeared that century," says Sir Leslie Stephen. "A man whose genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu," says Macaulay. Butler has influenced men's thought; Wesley influenced their conduct. Butler's influence was as much separated from his personality as is possible. Wesley's personality was the chief source of his influence. Life was another thing to multitudes after seeing and hearing him. An address from the pulpit, a few words spoken in private, gave them not only new ideas, but new aims and motives. A summons to leave home and occupation called hundreds of men from the farm, the loom, and the mine, and sent them forth as evangelists and missionaries. His approval was henceforth their highest earthly reward, his rebuke their most dreaded punishment. So characteristically was Wesley a man of action that one feels confident he must have been a soldier or a statesman had he not been what he was. His powers of administration and command would surely have carried him into a career of influence either political or military. As it was, they found abundant

scope in the career assigned to him by Providence. Nowhere, for instance, is Wesley more the man of action than as a preacher. Compare him with Butler : The *Sermons* of the latter are scarcely distinguishable, both as regards their topics and their style, from the *Analogy*. They are, for the most part, disquisitions in moral philosophy and ethics. As such they have permanent rank, are edited from time to time by professors, and are used as text-books in Universities. They are worthy of a great philosophical divine, but they have little or nothing in common with the sermons by which the generality of mankind can be moved and quickened, convinced and converted. They have influenced theology in this country somewhat, and philosophy more ; they have contributed powerfully to the formation of a thinker here and there ; but they did not tell—it was impossible they should tell—directly upon the faith and morals of general hearers.

How different was Wesley's preaching, the first and directest agency in the great Revival ! Many have been more eloquent

than he—more original, more profound, more stimulating to thought ; but for bringing truth home to the conscience, for presenting the great themes of the Gospel with clearness, with impressiveness, with a closeness of application in which calmness of manner was united with a deep, steadfast fire of earnestness, it is doubtful whether Wesley has ever been surpassed.

I may quote here Mr. Lecky's words : " His style was simple, terse, colloquial, abounding in homely images, characterised above all things by its extreme directness, by the manifest and complete subordination of all other considerations to the one great end of impressing his doctrines on his hearers, animated by a tone of intense and penetrating sincerity that found its way to the hearts of thousands." There are few better descriptions of the kind of preaching that will always be, and deserve to be, popular, in the best sense of the word.

An illustration of the similarity between Butler the thinker, and Wesley the man of action, may be offered. Each of them had a profound sense of the vastness and mystery

of things, and of the limits of human knowledge arising from the limitation of our faculties. "It is not perhaps easy," says Butler, "even for the most reasonable men always to bear in mind the degree of our ignorance, and make due allowance for it." "A man must really, in the literal sense, know nothing at all who is not sensible of his ignorance . . . nor can we give the whole account of any one thing whatever." In the same strain, Wesley writes: "How little does the wisest of men know of anything more than he can see with his eyes! What clouds and darkness cover the whole scene of things invisible and eternal. . . . We have no senses suited to eternal and invisible objects. . . . A thinking man wants an opening of whatever kind, to let in light from eternity."

With views like these did Butler and Wesley face the question of religion, its evidences, its claims upon men, and the more or less of difficulty experienced in substantiating those claims by sufficient proof. On every side were those who said that the evidence was inadequate, and that,

to say the very least, great difficulties in the way of belief remained when the apologists had done their best. This, neither Butler nor Wesley denied. Here they were at one. It is in the further treatment of the case that the characteristic difference between them appears. Butler replies, in effect: 'The evidence may not be altogether what we could desire, but is it not sufficient to make it reasonable that we should act upon it? We are in no position to insist upon demonstrative proof, which, indeed, is very rarely forthcoming in regard to practical matters. Probability is the guide we follow in the great majority of instances where we act at all. Ought we not to follow it in this matter also? Moreover, may not difficulties in respect of religious belief constitute for some persons the chief trial of life, a moral test on which much depends, just as, with other persons, common temptations to vice or folly furnish the tests by which character is disciplined and judged?' These are very weighty suggestions, and they have never been more powerfully urged than by Butler.

But Wesley's method is altogether different. He replies by shifting the whole question to another ground, and making his appeal to a faculty that has not yet been consulted—a faculty whose powers have been under estimated, whose true office has been forgotten, whose very name is by many associated with feebleness and inferiority. After briefly examining the array of intellectual forces engaged in the task of making religion appear reasonable, Wesley turned away from them and called upon Faith to awake and direct its vision to the things of God. "Faith," said he, "supplies the need, showing what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither could it before enter our heart to conceive. It gives faculties suited to things invisible. I now am assured that these things are so. I experience them in my own breast. And this I conceive to be the strongest evidence of Christianity. I do not undervalue traditional evidence. Let it have its place and its due honour. It is highly serviceable in its kind, and in its degree. And yet I cannot set it on a level with this : 'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit.

Whoso believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.' ”

These were the methods of Butler and of Wesley respectively. Each was successful in its own way, and on its own lines. The reasoning of the one dissolved the foundations of a crude and shallow scepticism; the preaching of the other gathered innumerable converts into the fold of Christ. The one left behind him the greatest philosophical treatise ever written in defence of Christianity; the other revived the Church and roused the nation, and left behind him an ever-expanding organisation for spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”

XII

THE LETTERS OF BIRKBECK HILL

TO the late Dr. Birkbeck Hill all serious students of English literature are under obligation. Not that he made any important contribution to the thought of his age, or produced the kind of original work in prose or verse that lifts a man into the ranks of a nation's foremost writers. But he was a literary workman of exceptional merit, an annalist and commentator by instinct and by training. Untiring in research, and storing his excellent memory with ever-increasing knowledge, he acquired, within the sphere to which he devoted himself, a mastery such as few have attained. The Eighteenth Century was his period, and Johnson and his contemporaries the special objects of his study. It is not the greatest or brightest period in the history

of English life and letters, but it is an exceedingly interesting one, and it so interested Birkbeck Hill that he specialised upon it through many laborious years with admirable result.

It used to be said that Simon Wilkin's edition of *Sir Thomas Browne* was the best edited of English classics. That place of honour must now be assigned to Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell's Johnson*. It is a monument of skilled labour, a triumphant piece of editing, worthy of the immortal Biography itself, and of the historic Clarendon Press that has given it to us in six stately volumes. Happily for the general reader, *Boswell's Johnson* may be had in cheap and pleasant forms suited to his taste and to his purse. But for the student, for the Johnsonian devotee, for the lover of literary history and anecdote, Dr. Hill's edition can have no rival. It is costly, as such a book must needs be, but if it can be acquired by scorning delights and living laborious days, there are few courses of discipline that will be more amply repaid.

To this, his *magnum opus* and chief claim

to distinction, Dr. Birkbeck Hill has added *Johnson's Letters* in two volumes, *Johnsonian Miscellanies* in two volumes, and two or three volumes of supplementary Essays. And, lastly, to complete his labours in this department of literature, he has edited in a way that leaves nothing to be desired, Gibbon's *Autobiography*, a book that still remains without a rival in its class.

Outside the period which he may be said to have made his own, Birkbeck Hill published in 1897 *The Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, to William Allingham*, with Notes that make it a valuable contribution to recent literary history. Hill was indeed an editor born for such work as he undertook, and admirably equipped for it by training and experience. None but the student of literature knows what scope there is for such work as is to be found in these volumes. Allusions to which the key was lost are made intelligible; references are verified and illustrated; facts that have dropped out of their place are discovered and restored; and errors that have crept into history or tradition are corrected. Many a previously

blind alley is opened up, and becomes a path into regions hitherto unexplored. Misconceptions are removed, and the interests of truth and of a right judgment of men and things greatly advanced. The labour involved in all this is enormous, and it does not secure popular appreciation, but it is none the less of great value, and it is at once a duty and a pleasure to pay grateful tribute to it in the person of Dr. Birkbeck Hill.

The volume of his *Letters* recently published—he died in February 1903—is arranged and edited by his daughter, who successfully follows her father's methods of annotation, so that the book constitutes a sufficient biography. It is not a great one, nor does it reveal a great nature. The life-tasks of a working editor are not favourable to originality or intellectual distinction; or perhaps it would be truer to say that an original mind would hardly be found giving itself to such tasks. But, as already intimated, Birkbeck Hill was, in a very honourable sphere of service, “a workman that needed not to be ashamed,”

and there is no need to dwell upon the absence of qualities that he never claimed to possess. The *Letters* are interesting as a record of his occupations, and as illustrating his mental formation and habit. But he was not a letter-writer by gift and calling, to be numbered with the masters of the gracious art. To the present writer the letters written while Hill was an undergraduate at Oxford are the most interesting in the collection. There he was brought into contact with men whose memory is one of the writer's most cherished possessions. In later life Birkbeck Hill wrote an account, from which we take the following :

“ In my undergraduate days at Oxford I was introduced, by William Fulford, the editor of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, to the small knot of men of whom Burne-Jones and Morris have since become by far the most conspicuous. He had taken his Bachelor's degree before I matriculated, but to my great good fortune he stayed on in residence. I made his acquaintance in the College Hall at Pembroke. . . . There

I met Charles Faulkner, afterwards Fellow and Mathematical Tutor of University College, and the third member in the famous art firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. He was a man of singularly noble character, the most truthful man I have ever known. Junior to him were Richard Watson Dixon and Edwin Hatch, later Bampton Lecturer and Reader in Ecclesiastical History. I still recall the wonder with which I watched Dixon as he sat in an armchair by the fire, smoking a long ‘churchwarden.’ His complexion was unusually dark, and his hair was black—‘Black Dixon’ was the name he often went by among those who did not know him. From time to time he would join in the conversation in a deep, slow voice, in striking contrast with Morris’s quick, eager tones. I looked upon him as an oracle of wisdom. He was very poor, living, I believe, on one hundred pounds a year. He was not able to subscribe to the Boat Club, and was therefore by no means popular. Yet I remember being told that when a collection was made in the college during the Crimean War for

the Florence Nightingale Fund, for the relief of the sufferers, his subscription was largest of all. To very few men, indeed, was he known, but those who knew him well loved him for his great simplicity of character. He was 'an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile.' "

His acquaintance with this gifted set of men undoubtedly had a quickening influence on Birkbeck Hill's mind. He had been brought up, he says, in Utilitarian doctrines, and the romantic side of art and literature had been hitherto unknown to him. He was now led to read the *Morte d'Arthur*, Tennyson, Ruskin, Thackeray, *Aurora Leigh*, lent to him by Swinburne, and to feel something of the charm of the Pre-Raphaelite conception of art. But the influence was general rather than specific. It did not draw him into the train of ideas and aspirations that had such powerful expression in the lives of his friends. Nor were the friendships then formed very close or lasting, save perhaps in the case of Faulkner, with whom he maintained a long intimacy. When the bond of common

University life is broken men generally go their own way.

Birkbeck Hill was a tender-hearted, affectionate man in his family, and with intimate friends, but he had strong dislikes, and could say and write harsh things. Within a short time of making Hatch's acquaintance, he describes him in terms that the Editor would have done well to omit. It is evident that some characters were so antipathetic to him that he was wholly unable to understand them. Hence he could write of Dean Stanley, "I must read Stanley's *Life*, and write an essay on him. That courtly, picturesque impostor deserves a sharp attack. He had never cleared his mind of cant, though he disguised it, I dare say, from himself." We do not know that this essay was ever written. Let us hope that he read the *Life*, and that, having 'gone to scoff,' he learned to love, or at least to esteem.

Dr. Hill's letters show that he was an Agnostic, as the term is generally understood. He says little as to his beliefs, but speaks more frequently of his disbeliefs.

They did not sit happily upon him. That belief brings peace, and unbelief does not, is a fact attested in numberless instances and as a fact deserves consideration. The death of a son thirteen years of age left him with a deep and abiding sorrow, a sorrow without hope. "The thought that immortality, intensely longed for, was yet but a dream," says his daughter, "was one which was constantly in his mind." "I have been talking to-day," he writes, "with L. and F. about God, the immortality of the soul, and religion. I hate such talks, for they always leave me unhappy. Truth first and above all things, even if it brings misery in its train. I will never try to comfort myself with what is false. Yet truth is very hard."

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of,
And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

The deep depression of the words just quoted often recurs. He looked wistfully upon the faith he had rejected, though always confirming himself in the rejection of it: "At the same time I can admire the imagination of long ages in slowly

bringing forth from dreamland the whole scheme of Christianity, with its shadowy world and its shadowy hosts, and the grand reconciliation between God and man, by the atonement. It is a very noble poem, but it is of such stuff as dreams are made of."

But the dreams continue to haunt him :
 " I do not see what is to supply that foundation of great thoughts which rises up in us from our familiarity with the great thinkers and poets of the Bible." And again : " Some two or three years ago there was a discussion in one of the London papers about which were the most touching passages in books. . . . If I were to cite the lines which affect me most I think they would be two or three verses in the *Dies Iræ* :

" ' Qui Mariam absolvisti,
 Et latronem exaudisti,
 Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

 Quærens me, sedisti lassus :
 Redemisti, crucem passus :
 Tantus labor non sit cassus.' "

" The tears have often come into my eyes as I have repeated these lines to myself."

In Dr. Irons's translation these verses are rendered :

“Thou the sinful woman savedst ;
Thou the dying thief forgavest ;
And to me a hope vouchsafest.

Faint and weary Thou hast sought me,
On the cross of suffering bought me ;
Shall such grace be vainly brought me ? ”

There is something very affecting to the Christian mind in the tributes offered from time to time to the deep, essential truths of the Gospel by those who are careful to state that they do not accept them. We see how Birkbeck Hill was moved by the appeal to Christ in the pathetic stanzas of the *Dies Iræ*. We know in what terms of appreciation George Eliot wrote of the *Imitatio Christi*. We recall the homage that Rousseau, Mill, and others who would not, and could not, call themselves Christians, have paid to the Person and character of our Lord. The spiritual qualities in them respond, but the judgment or understanding refuses His call. But why should this part of our nature carry the day against faculties whose apprehension is of

a higher order, whose insight is deeper than that of the reasoning powers ?

The author of *In Memoriam* was not unversed in philosophy and criticism, or unacquainted with the "difficulties of belief" when he wrote :

" I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye ;
Nor through the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun.

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice ' believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep,

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, ' I have felt.' "

XIII

“ BESIDE STILL WATERS ”

THE volume by Mr. Arthur Benson that bears this title, together with its predecessors, *The Upton Letters*, and *From a College Window*, should be placed upon the shelf where Amiel's *Journal*, and Matthew Arnold's *Essays* already stand. It is of the same order ; it belongs to the same class. *Beside Still Waters* is a title that suggests the writer's love of quiet processes of meditation and self-communing, and of tranquil places in which to engage in them. He is no cynic, but crowded streets and people in a hurry are repellent to him. He is not self-complacent—far from it—but he finds himself to be very good company. Though never less alone than when alone, and not caring to bring others into

his solitude, he loves to expound that solitude to the world, compensating for his aversion to society by ample revelation of what he thinks and feels in his retirement. The class of writing of which this volume is an attractive example is, we think, likely to increase, though the qualities of its style and the charm of its spirit can never be very common.

Since Mr. Roosevelt reissued the word strenuous, to be caught up and re-echoed by people of all pursuits, from the Mission preacher to the footballer, the feeling that, after all, strenuousness is not everything, is not "the conclusion of the whole matter," but that meditation and the quiet culture of the soul have still a place in the programme of life, has found frequent expression. There must at any time be many persons for whom the strenuous life, lived largely in public, full of engagements and of quick movement from place to place, is not the best. Its pace disturbs, its noise confuses, its organised activity alternately bewilders and depresses them. They would fain "dwell in a peaceable habitation . . .

in quiet resting-places," and are not to be lightly upbraided for the same. "They also serve." Shy, retiring people, the recluse and the dreamer even, may supply a something, ethical and intellectual, which the unrestful age has need of, and may do more for it in the long run than some of their strenuous brethren. How few of the leaders of men, captains of industry and the like, have added to the world's store of wealth treasure to be weighed against the "healing power" of Wordsworth, and the spirit of the gentle life revealed in the poems and letters of Cowper!

It has often been pointed out that the love of nature in its deeper and more delicate manifestation is of modern growth. It has developed, that is to say, alongside of the noise and heat and eagerness that filled the nineteenth century. This is a striking fact, partly to be accounted for, in our judgment, by the reaction or antagonism which great dominating tendencies always produce in a certain class of minds. These form, not necessarily a protesting minority, but a minority that feels itself

drawn or driven to ways of life and modes of thought other than those generally prevailing. From the roar of the cotton mill the weaver goes to take his pleasure in collecting ferns and mosses. Mincing Lane and Capel Court send some few at least to draw more leisurely breath in the regions of which Walton's *Compleat Angler* and White's *Selborne* are the handbooks, or Wordsworth the guardian and interpreter. It is not merely in spite of our bustling, noisy life, but because of it, that quiet scenes, and influences that tranquillise, are perhaps more prized, by minorities at least, than ever.

The immense stress now laid upon the energetic, the active, the practical aspects of life, does of itself help to bring home to many that these are not all, and that to think and to feel may be as important as to act and to do. To such persons the view of life “from a College window,” to borrow from Mr. Benson, may show some things not generally seen from the window of the office, or the suburban villa, or the railway carriage, three main observatories

of our time. Nor is it any disparagement of our newspapers to say that while all things done under the sun report themselves daily in Fleet Street the exposition of their true significance is not wholly in the hands of the journalists. Those who read, and think, and write "beside still waters," as Mr. Benson, following the Psalmist, has it, have sometimes a truer insight, or, at least, make better guesses at the inner meaning of things than the most brilliant writers of leading articles, working with an ear at the telephone and a hand on the typewriter.

So much, then, for the class of books to which *Beside Still Waters* belongs. We need them as supplying, in a busy, hurrying age, thoughts worked out at leisure by those who, taking little part in affairs, yet know what is going on, who have time to consider and compare, and are equipped for the task by knowledge of literature and philosophy, and, still more, by possession of the philosophic mind. The plan of the present work is that of the history of a mind, and if we say of the author's mind,

he must not blame us. It would have been better, we think, if the hero, who is not a hero at all, but the psychological subject of the book, had been frankly named Arthur Benson instead of Hugh Neville. The writer could then have "let himself go" a little more freely, and the reader would have been spared a certain irritation caused by the mode of treatment adopted. Hugh Neville is altogether unsubstantial. No dramatic power has gone to the making of him, and he is shadowy and unreal throughout. We often forget his existence, and do not miss him. The author seems also to forget him and to get on very well without him, until, suddenly remembering, as it were, he brings him in again, by name at least, that we may know that these are Hugh Neville's reasonings and imaginings and not the author's own. But it will not do. We are persuaded that Hugh Neville wrote *The Upton Letters*, and *From a College Window*, as well as *Beside Still Waters*, and that he subsequently edited the letters of a very exalted personage.

The value of this book does not, in our judgment, lie in its scope or theme as a whole, which is the portrayal of a pilgrim's progress in the spheres of religion, ethics, and artistic development. It lies rather in much delightful detail of mental analysis, in nature study of a very tender and sympathetic kind, and in the spirit, at once humane and urbane, tolerant and hopeful, in which he deals with human life and character. Much that is best in the book is when Hugh Neville is out of sight and out of mind, and the writer in his own person thinks his thought or pursues his fancy. As thus: "It is very difficult to say which of the days of a man's life are wasted and which are fruitful. It is not necessarily the days in which a man gives himself up to his chosen work in which he makes most progress. Sometimes a long inarticulate period, when there seems to a man to be a dearth of ideas, a mental drought, acts as a sort of incubation in which a thought is slowly conceived and perfected. Sometimes a long period of repression stores force at high pressure.

The lean years are often the prelude, even the cause, of the years of fatness, when the exhausted and overteemed earth has lain fallow and still, storing its vital juices.”

Though the author does not succeed in making Hugh Neville live, he describes with much insight the stages of religious thought and feeling through which such an one as he might pass. Various orthodoxies—that of the established order of things, that of the Low Church, that of the Roman Catholic—are discussed, dealt with, and passed by, none of them receiving any assent beyond that of a certain tolerant sympathy.

During his early College life Hugh Neville’s belief, accepted in childhood as a matter of course, dropped from him, or, as the writer expresses it, “one by one his cherished convictions were washed away.” They were hardly “convictions,” it would seem, and were, perhaps, not “cherished” with much care. But whatever they were, they disappeared, and he had a religion to seek, or devise for himself. The slender

fiction, which, as we have said, fails to make Hugh Neville a "live" personality, suggests a not too virile character, of blameless morals, refined tastes and much susceptibility to the influence of nature, of music, and of art. His long communings with himself are not without charm, and sometimes show fine thinking admirably expressed; but the sentiment is apt to become sentimental and the self-study morbid, while the reasoning is hardly good enough for the importance of the subject and of the issues to which it leads. The conclusions, taken out of the haze of poetic writing in which they are involved, appear lame and inadequate. As thus: "The mystery of conversion is nothing more than the conscious apprehension of the fact that one's life is meant to be noble and beautiful, and that one has the power to make it nobler and more beautiful than it is." And again: "Christ bade men trust their deepest and widest intuitions, their sense of dependence upon God, their consciousness of Divine origin." And again: "The Saviour, at least in the simple re-

ords, had but shown the significance of the primary emotions, had taught humanity that it was free as air, dear to the heart of God, heir of a goodly inheritance of love and care.”

It is not surprising that along with such an interpretation as this of the office and mission of Jesus Christ, there should be on the part of Hugh Neville an almost energetic—anything quite energetic is hardly to be looked for—protest against the influence of St. Paul on Christian thought. “Perhaps it was not too much to say that the Pauline influence had been to a great extent a misfortune. He had formalised Christianity; he had linked it closely to the Judaic system; he was ultimately responsible for Puritanism, that is to say, it was his influence more than any other that had given the Jewish Scriptures their weight in the Christian scheme. . . . St. Paul had been so intent upon drawing in those to whom tradition was dear, that in trying to harmonise the new with the old, he had made concessions and developed doctrines that had detrimentally

affected Christianity ever since, and gone near to cast it in a different mould."

We have often been told that the theologians are mainly responsible for the misrepresentation of Christianity, and the consequent alienation from it of the general lay mind. It was Mr. Arnold's belief that the literary touch was what the Bible was waiting for after all the heavy handling of the theologians, and so he gave us *Hebraism and Hellenism*, *St. Paul and Protestantism*, *Literature and Dogma*, and other writings which, surely, Hugh Neville must have read. But looking back a generation we cannot see that a deeper, truer interpretation of the Gospel, a more adequate solution of the mysteries of religion, dates from Mr. Arnold's labours. Mr. Benson writes in a more modest spirit than his predecessor, but he, too, uses the literary, not the theological method, does not think very much of St. Paul, and more than hints that Plato was nearer the mark. Despite the charm of his writing, and the indications it affords of the scholar, the gentleman, and gracious, kindly soul, his

volume is not of great value as a contribution to religious thought or faith. The “New Theology” may be in the air, but it seems as far as ever from being condensed or crystallised.

XIV

FROM AN OLD MINISTER TO A STUDENT
AT DR. DODDRIDGE'S ACADEMY,
NORTHAMPTON

March 31st, 1735.

DEAR JACK,

This from the little study that thou knowest by the side of Parson's Green, which name did at the first take my fancy ; and next, its uncommon quiet, suiting as well my present infirmities as my prayerful studies, did move me to seek here a "*deversorium viatoris*," or pilgrim's lodging-place. Here do I often think of thee, not alone because Parson's Green doth by sheer literation put me in mind of Green Parsons, of which, be not angry, dear Jack, thou knowest thou art one, but because thou art dear to me as my son, my own son in the faith. I would have written to thee many times ere this to give thee both counsel and comfort, but for the infirmity

which is, I fear, both of nature and of habit with me, *peccatum originis et peccatum actuale*, whereby it comes to pass that good things which I purpose I do not always perform ; of which besetment, Jack, thou art not so free thyself but that it becomes thee better to forgive another than to reproach him, to say rather, "It was well that it was in thine heart," than "Pay me that thou owest." Nor will I urge that I have received no letter from thee this long time, for if thy youth makes it fitting thou shouldest minister to me, mine age hath with it a kind of duty to serve thy youth. Paul was debtor to the Jew and the Greek, though truly he owed them nothing as this world reckons matters, and I am still thy debtor, Jack, though it were hard for thee to prove that debt at King's Bench, for if I can do thee good, that good I owe thee to do it.

There be those, I find, that set but little store by Colleges like thine. They will have it that clerks and laymen were best rubbed together in the schools, for, say they, too much clergy spoils the man.

The Seminarists among the Papists, as I have seen myself, walk the streets with their eyes upon the ground, which methinks is rather to be commended in a woman than in a man; and my neighbour Hickes, whose jests thou knowest, saith that our Students of Divinity are like the daughters of Zion, who walk mincing as they go. He was no friend of me and thee, who divided all human folks into men, women, and parsons, as though the latter were a *tertium quid*, or something of both. His shrewd saying had been forgotten long ago, as it deserveth, were it not for a foolish sort of ministers that magnify their office, not after Paul's manner, but with infinite conceit, and requiring of esteem, which, as I read the world, men will not give to such as demand it. *Petite, et dabitur vobis*, "Ask, and it shall be given you," is better counsel in coming to God than in dealing with men. Vanity sorts ill with law, or physic, as wise men know, but with divinity even fools cannot abide it. But I am persuaded better things of thee, dear Jack, though I thus speak, else would I smite

and spare not for thy crying. Thou knowest that Parson must needs be man—*non homo solum sed vir*—and, let the world say what it will, and reckon one here and there who is rather *homunculus* than *homo*, Christ's ministers have good report for manliness, if one shall understand aright what manhood is. But herein many err greatly. There is manhood that standeth mainly in drinking of ale and smoking of tobacco; there is manhood whose outward sign is brave clothing, whose valour lieth in great oaths and fierce quarrels, whose knowledge is chiefly knowledge of evil. This kind of manhood goeth not to church, but railleth at them that do. Other sort of manhood prides itself on a full purse, and sees nothing venerable in the poverty of the Apostles themselves. But what are these things to thee? Be not manly after their sort; thine own calling shall be to thee a school of better manhood. As for thine office—make much of it wherein it gives thee opportunity to glorify God and serve thy fellows; make little of it wherein it gives thee claim to honour at the hands

of others. Remember, it is thy badge to serve—thy Master first, and men for His sake. In thy peaceful warfare is room for soldier's courage, lawyer's wit, husbandman's patient labour, and these purged of the *φρόνημα σαρκὸς*, or wisdom of the flesh. For thy gown and reverend name, neither greatly prize, nor despise them. "Be what thou seemest" is a good rule of manliness; "Be what thou oughtest" is a better rule of Godliness. The Pastor's heart, the Preacher's tongue, the Fisher's net, the Watchman's staff—let these be thine, not in name only, but in truth, and none will count thee less than true man, while such as can discern will know thee to be more than man, that is, a man of God.

I had thought to question thee somewhat concerning thy teachers, but I forbear. It is not altogether well for young men to discuss their elders, nor seemly for one who has got his discharge from the schools ("*donatum jam rude*," as Horace hath it) to listen while scholars judge their masters. To borrow a phrase from

good Mr. Hooker, and turn it somewhat for my use, "He that goeth about to persuade scholars that they are not so well taught as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable hearers." But this it is no way in my mind to do. However, I have some thoughts on teaching and learning that I would fain open to thee, Jack, and the more so that they are not wholly resolved, but obstinately dwell in paradox. Can a teacher do much for a scholar, or even a little, or anything at all? Put it scholastically, *utrum magister multum aut nihil valeat*, and I could argue now for *multum* and then for *nihil*, and that in good faith. For the first; it is a teacher who says "Thou owest unto me even thine own self," and for the second; he says again, "Every man shall bear his own burden." If we consider the force and virtue of truth, and the noble infection of goodness, with that subtly penetrating influence wherewith men's thoughts and purposes do affect the souls of others, moving them to like endeavours; what may he not hope to

accomplish who works, not in metal or in clay, but upon a sensitive and capable soul, yielding itself to his workman touch, and, as it were, outrunning his effort in swift apprehension of his purpose? We have seen this responsive and imitative faculty not disdaining to copy the very infirmities of a master, so that from the school where a lame man teacheth come a score of pupils limping; and if one great preacher have a hindrance in his speech, or an unusual manner in his cough, half your budding divines in a province shall cough and stammer to perfection. And if in things indifferent, whereunto he gives no exhortation, a teacher thus affect his scholars, how much more shall he mould and impress their disciple minds in things of great moment, whereunto his strong desire and their great willingness combine?

“*Sed contra est,*” as saith Aquinas. Consider again how solitary is the spirit of a man, in its growth and fashioning how uncertain and irregular, by what strange divagations it cometh to its ends, how past all comprehension are its inward and

prolific motions, "for what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him;" and it would seem a hopeless task to meddle with that wherein each man is a stranger to his own brother, and must needs be alone in however much of company. "Every man shall bear his own burden." This, I take it, is true, not alone of the account to be given at the last, but of the life that now is, in which life I discern not more of society than of solitude. The one is without us, the other is within. The one provides means, opportunities, conditions; it is in the other that each man acts and is. Think not that I refine too much when I thus speak. Consider it, Jack, and thou wilt see that all our companionships do not invade those solitudes wherein He Who made our spirits hath set them like worlds separated by interstellar spaces. But to come to plainer speech, this I mean: when all helps and appliances for wisdom are given to youth, it is as though one had piled stones and timber at a man's feet; whether he will build with them and to what purpose, God

only knows, Who understandeth his thoughts afar off and knoweth him altogether. Master and scholar, parent and child may journey together. What he himself sees and hears the teacher knows, but what the youth's eye sees, what his ear hears, what his heart conceives, this he cannot tell. Doth he not therefore teach by guess, and find the issues of his labour in greater good or greater evil than he thought of, or fail to find them at all ?

And now, Jack, I know thee well enough to know thou art grinning in thy sleeve, and saying, " Brave words ! when the case is only this, that some men profit by their teachers, and others not." Put thine own meaning on it, Jack, but tack this moral to it. One man God calls to great and honourable service, fashioning him by hands of teachers ; he is bred in the schools, and haply owes his own self also to some master mind. Another shall hear God's voice as Samuel heard it at Shiloh, when old Eli knew himself passed over, and had no other counsel for the child than to bid him answer Him that called. Thus

God useth teachers, lest age be discouraged and youth be too forward; and again He useth them not, for all souls are His. Let Him do what seemeth Him good.

As for the teacher's reward, it hath a kind of sadness in it, for he teacheth best that leadeth his scholar to need him no more. All teaching hath its ground and beginning in authority, but seeketh quickly to pass therefrom to the demonstrating of such things as be demonstrable, and for other, highest things, so to commend them to every man's conscience that he that believeth may have the witness in himself. From parents and schoolmasters do we first hear the name of God, with all revealed perfections of His Being and precepts of His will, so that our belief in God doth, as it were, rise out of our belief in our teachers. And there, as I take it, Rome would have it stay, so that to the end "*Credo in Ecclesiam*" should lead the way, and "*Credo in Deum*" come after. But he that believeth on authority is only preparing for true belief, as the child that leaneth yet upon the nurse's hand is but

learning to walk. Ask thyself, as the Lord asked of Pilate, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?" The men of Sychar were first moved to faith by the saying of the woman which testified, "He told me all that ever I did;" but by and by it reached this, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ." And though it be said, 'None can thus see Him now, but all alike are shut up to believe on Him through testimony of the Apostles,' yet is there great difference between belief that hath testimony for its foundation, and belief which goeth on to ground itself in that whereof testimony is given. If we believe the Scriptures to the end that we may believe in Christ of whom they testify, how much more shall we but believe our present guides and teachers to the end we may come to a true faith and knowledge of Christ Himself? When therefore a scholar passeth from trust in his teacher to an apprehension of the things taught, doth it grieve the teacher now no more

to bear his disciple in his arms, but see him go alone? Nay, rather, he will say with John Baptist, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." Truth, yea He who is the Truth, shall become more to us; the *παιδαγωγοὶ εἰς Χριστόν*, the schoolmasters who led us to Christ, shall become less, for it is the law of the Kingdom that our "Faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Here, Jack, I dropped my pen some days ago, and with it dropped a thread of discourse haply too long drawn out, but, anyhow, 'tis broken now beyond piecing.

In thy so-long-since written letter I marked what thou didst say concerning the evil of the times, as though they were worse than all that had gone before. I will not defend the age against thy charges. 'Tis as well said first as last—It is an evil world. Nor would I seek to reconcile thee to it; evil men will labour hard enough at that. But it would seem to be a mark of earnest souls, grieved with present evils,

and not well remembering the proportion of evils past, to reckon their own age that wherein all sin and mischief have come to a head. In which judgment since some must needs err, it may well be that all are mistaken as not seeing far enough into the ways of God. In his *Ecclesiastical Polity* Hooker doth upbraid that time wherein he lived as an “age full of tongue, and weak of brain—neither much knowing nor greatly regarding the right help of true art and learning.” Roger Ascham, in his *Schoolmaster*, is more copious in rebuke of his age: “Innocency is gone, bashfulness is banished; much presumption in youth; small authority in age; reverence is neglected; duties be confounded; and, to be short, disobedience doth overflow the banks of good order, almost in every place, almost in every degree of man.” A few years before Ascham, good Bishop Latimer, preaching at Paul’s Cross, makes his lament thus: “London was never so ill as it is now. In times past men were full of pity and compassion, but now there is no pity.” And so I doubt not the better

sort of men have bewailed the times they lived in, from Elijah, at Horeb, who said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord . . . and I, even I only, am left," to good Master Herbert, who hath written thus :

"Religion stands on tiptoe in our land,
Ready to pass to the American strand ;
When height of malice, and prodigious lusts,
Impudent sinning, witchcrafts, and distrusts
(The marks of future bane), shall fill our cup
Unto the brim, and make our measure up,

.
Then shall religion to America flee ;
They have their times of Gospel e'en as we."

If we reckon our own age the world's worst, let it be of our penitence, not of our anger or despair, even as Paul called himself chief of sinners, not as doubting of God's mercy, but out of great humility ; which confession is not to be hard pressed for its meaning, but is understood by them that have experience of evangelical repentance. Thy better knowledge of the world, when it cometh, will not show thee less evil in it but more good. As Mr. Baxter said when old, "I now see more good and more evil in all men than heretofore

I did. I see that good men are not so good as I once thought they were, but have more imperfections, and that nearer approach and fuller trial doth make the best appear more weak and faulty than their admirers at a distance think. And I find that few are so bad, as either malicious enemies or censorious separating professors do imagine. In some, indeed, I find that human nature is corrupted into a greater likeness to devils than I once thought any on earth had been. But even in the wicked, usually, there is more for grace to make advantage of, and more to testify for God and holiness than I once believed there had been."

And here I might well end this letter, but thou knowest me of old, Jack, somewhat slow at beginning, but oft unable to make an end. Thus was it with me even in my younger days, and doubtless mine infirmity is rather more than less in mine elder age. But I trust thou art not infected with this new-fangled conceit of brevity, as though time spent in reasonable discourse were not well spent, and none other merit were

to be accounted of than that of coming soon to our "lastly." To be sure I would not have thy prentice-preaching unconscionably long, but aim not neither to be too daintily short. Put strength in thy sermon and they will not chide thee for its length. 'Tis this weakness long drawn out that wearieth folks, and setteth them on the cuckoo-cry for short sermons.

Since living here at Parson's Green, and hearing sermons more frequently than for many years past, I do take sides somewhat with the people in this matter of preaching. Then let me put thee in remembrance, Jack, although thou reckon it a truism, that the Minister is for the people, not the people for the Minister. This, I take it, is a kind of master-truth, governing many others: "Not to be ministered unto but to minister"; make this thy watchword. And yet I have heard preachers talk as though it were the people's chief duty to admire their parts, and endure cheerfully all their flights of eloquence, their subtle reasonings, and their array of learning. 'Tis counted petty treason not to flatter

them, and unmitigated high treason to spy gaps in their logic or patches in their rhetoric. But this is not the way of the shepherd with his sheep, or of the physician with the sick. The one saith, “ ’Tis my business to feed the flock,” the other, “ ’Tis not for me to blame his sickness but to heal it.” He that regardeth the end of preaching will heed men’s liking or disliking of his person and ministering, as it helpeth or hindereth toward that end. To be admired is not an end itself, though it may greatly serve one; to be flouted and misliked is not in itself failure, though it is to be feared it will forbid success.

Dear Jack, thou art one whom it is not hard to love, and thou hast gifts to please most men, but I pray thee bear gently on the people with thy learning. Be not too bookish in the pulpit, nor think to serve up scraps of scholastic and controversial divinity as “children’s meat.” Leave thy Latin in the study, and with it all that learned coinage of Councils and Synods, of Divines and Philosophers, which hath no currency with the common people. To

speaking that which the people cannot comprehend is more shame to preacher than to hearers. Bishop Bull was second to none of our moderns in the old learning, and yet, when preaching to his clergy, he lays his staff across their pedant shoulders thus: "Bring these doctors out of their academic cells, set them to preach in a country congregation, and they soon become the objects of laughter, or rather of pity to the wiser; to observe how they greedily snatch at every occasion of engaging in a controversy, and that perhaps such a one as was never before heard of by their hearers, but a controversy they had read in some of their books, though long ago dead and buried; thus manfully encountering ghosts and shadows, how learnedly they will discuss the barren subtleties of Aquinas or Scotus, which the poor souls no more understand than if they had read them a lecture out of Cornelius Agrippa's occult philosophy: how, when they come to practicals, they are *velut in alium mundum translati*, as if they were entered into a new unknown world; so frigid, barren,

and lifeless are their discourses on those subjects.”

For myself, Jack, as thou knowest, I am somewhat dull and heavy in my sermons, and am, indeed, too much that which I charge thee not to be ; wherefore see that thou do as I say, and not as I do. And truly my barren fancy pleadeth for me that none should expect in me those lively turns whereby discourse is so greatly quickened and enabled. But He who made me slow of speech, and of a bare, unfruitful fancy, hath dealt otherwise with thee. Thou hast a ready wit and a lively fancy, with pleasant knowledge of men’s ways and humours. These do thou use but not abuse. A jester in the pulpit is a fool out of place, but a wise man need not despise to touch a hearer’s fancy, or pass from generals to particulars with some well-timed story. So George Herbert’s *Country Parson*. “Sometimes he tells them stories and sayings of others, according as his text invites him ; for them also men heed, and remember better than exhortations, which, though earnest, often die with the sermon, especially with country

people, which are thick and heavy, and hard to raise to a point of zeal and fervency, and need a mountain of fire to kindle them ; but stories and sayings they will well remember."

(Here several pages of MS. are apparently wanting.)

And so, dear Jack, make full proof of thy ministry, and the Lord be with thee. Be not ashamed of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Two ways there are by which it hath been sought to conciliate the world and avoid the scandal of the cross. The one through fear of "science, falsely so called," surrendereth the treasure of Divine Doctrine ; the other, through fear of worldly men, doth renounce the practice of Godliness. This is to pay too dear for quiet life amongst men, "*et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*," for life's sake to lose all that makes life worth the living. He that dare neither confess his Saviour's cross, nor bear his own, hath nothing left of Christ. He hath gone out of his way to please men, and tuned his gospel to their carnal ear, to this end—that they esteem him not

more, but less. He hath made a bargain, but 'tis all of one side : He giveth all and getteth nothing. For this *scandalum crucis*, the offence of the cross, is that whereby we prevail, our enemies themselves being the judges. *In hoc signo vincimus*. Here is our secret of victory. But if thy gospel have no miracle in it, thou wilt do no mighty works by it. If God, and His Son, and Holy Spirit be not in it, if it know nothing of sacrifice for sin, of forgiveness, and a new creature in Christ Jesus, "then is the offence of the cross ceased," and its power likewise, so that like the idol, it is "nothing in the world," yea less than nothing. Lay it well to heart, Jack, the Cross—that is, first, the Lord's cross of redeeming death, and next the disciple's cross of mortified life—is not the weakness and hindrance of the Christian religion, but its very power. If it prosper it prospereth by the cross ; if it be hindered it is not the cross that hindereth.

(Again a portion missing.)

. . . And read once more what Augus-

tine saith of prayer before preaching. It is in his *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, book iv., chap. 15 : “ Our Christian orator will succeed more by piety in prayer than by gifts of oratory ; and so he ought to pray for himself, and for those he is about to address, before he essayeth to speak. And when the hour is come that he must speak, he ought, before he openeth his mouth, to lift up his thirsty soul to God, and to drink in what he is about to pour forth, and to be himself filled with what he is about to distribute. . . . Who can make us say what we ought, and in the way we ought, except Him in Whose hand both we and our speeches are ? ”

And while thou prayest as a preacher, pray also as a student, remembering the perils of the knowledge that puffeth up, and the great treasure of that knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent. Nor will I add another word but just this from the student’s prayer indited by Lord Bacon, which now I offer both for me and thee.

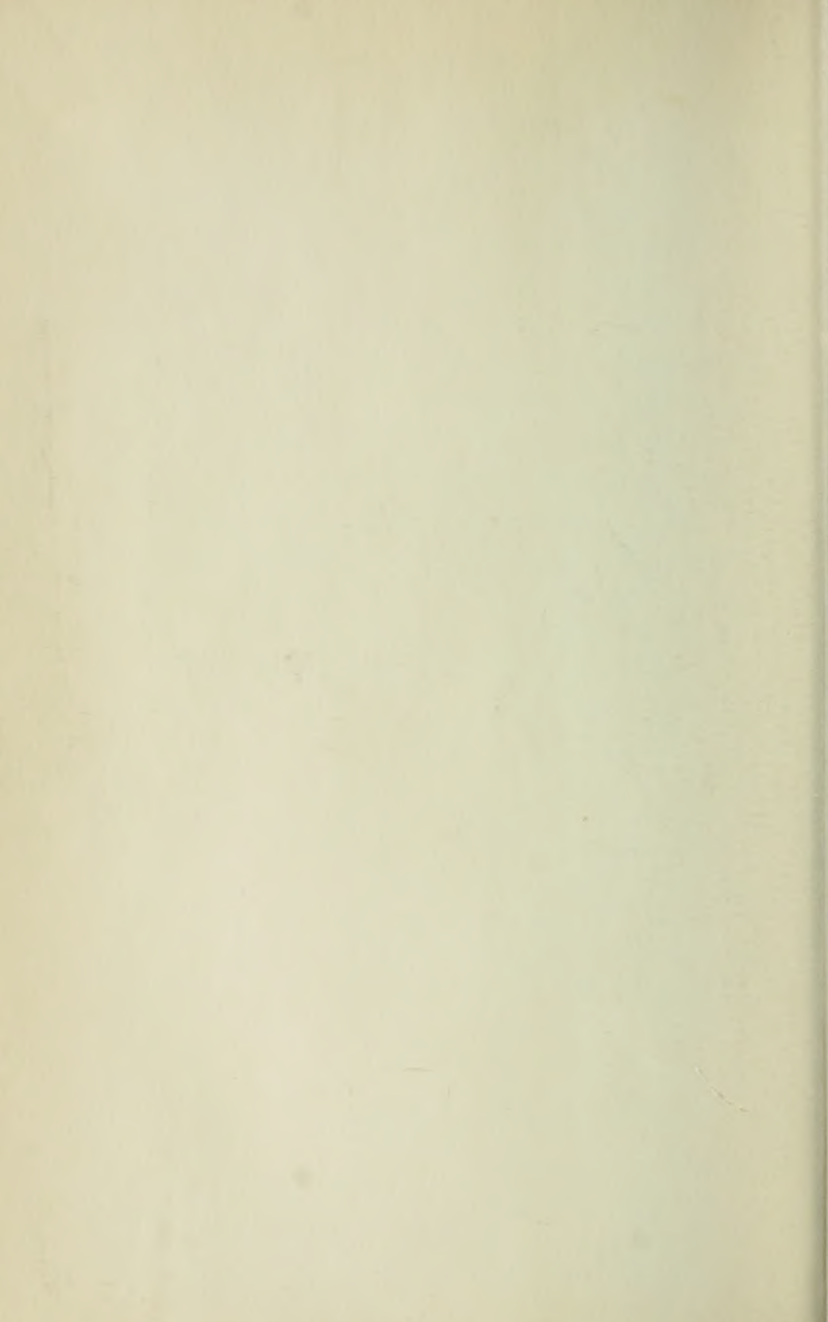
“ This also we humbly and earnestly

beg, that human things may not prejudice such as are Divine ; neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, anything of incredulity or intellectual night may arise in our minds towards the Divine mysteries. But rather that by our mind thoroughly cleansed and purged from fancy and vanities, and yet subject and perfectly given up to the Divine oracles, there may be given unto Faith the things that are Faith's.—AMEN.”









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